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New Statesman

South Africa: HOW LONG CAN IT LAST?

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New Statesman

Cover drawing: Ralph Steadman

South Africa's noose tightens
Inside and outside South Africa pressure is building on the regime. **Christopher Wilson, Phillip van Niekerk, Suzanne Cronje and Colm Toibin** report 17-20

NEWS 4-6

HOME

Andrew Graham: No U-turns for Mrs Thatcher 7
Paul Flather: Tories squeeze the polys 8
Brian Wilson: Politics of land ownership 10
Amrit Wilson, Zubaida Motala: Newham 7 result 12
Anwar Iqbal: Ilford attack 12
Mark Hollingsworth: One miner's tale 13

FOREIGN

Donald Sassoon: Italian Left plays for power 21

WEEKEND

Andrew Lumsden: A submerged continent of gays 25

BOOKS

Christopher Meade: Jeffrey Weeks's view of sexuality 28
Nina Hibbin: Naomi Mitchison's Mass Observation diaries 29
Nicci Gerrard: Victorian women 29
Francis Wheen: Woodrow Wyatt 30
Liz Heron: New fiction 30
Shorter reviews 31

ARTS

Benedict Nightingale: *Sweet Bird of Youth* 32
Stephanie Jordan: LCDT gala 33
Andrew Clements: Almeida and Vivier 33
Victoria Radin: New York Theatre 34
John Levett: Poem 34

BACKCHAT

Malcolm Imrie: Hooray Henley 35
Andrew Rissik: Television 36
Naseem Khan: Work in progress flies a kite in Huddersfield 37
Weekend competition 37
Crossword 38

PLUS

Mediawatch: Anne Karpf 14
Diary: Islander 16
Roger Woddis 16
Letters 23
Slump 23
Feedback 24

NEXT WEEK

Perspectives on publishing, including comment, criticism and advice from a writer, an agent and a publisher.
Colm Toibin: Argentinian torture on trial
Peter Kellner's Moscow Diary

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New Statesman

Vol 110 No 2835 19 July 1985

Live Aid euphoria

'THE WORLD is a wonderful place', asserted David Bowie expansively as Saturday's Live Aid performers, revellers and contributors were winding down after the day's act of mass charity. The juxtaposition between the fantastic euphoria experienced by all those involved in the concert — the occasion of Bowie's comment — and the reality of African death by starvation — the occasion for the concert — has disconcerted many. Our images of acceptable giving to the poor and hungry are drawn from a quite other tradition, of quiet and selfless dedication to others, an act of love made possible precisely by self-denial. Indeed, charity is often measured and evaluated in terms of the degree of self-denial involved (is Mother Teresa, was Albert Schweitzer really *pure* in motive?) rather than in terms of its effect on the suffering, the rights of the hungry to eat and certainly not in terms of the pleasure of giving.

The Live Aid concert owed nothing to that tradition, with its imagery of Christian sainthood. For that reason it allowed hundreds of thousands of people who would normally have no connection to mass famine but guilt and anxiety to feel that they could do something. If they felt euphoric along the way that is because to be part of a mass of people united by a common purpose does create powerful feelings of excitement and loss of self-interest (if not in saintly forms). It is an experience that is crucial to many political movements, and one that is not encompassed by the political language of individual rights and duties. The concert thus provided an essential link between masses of ordinary people, especially the young, and a distant human tragedy. When Overseas Development Minister Timothy Raison said of the effort: 'It shows that people really do care passionately. The idea that you leave everything to the government seems to me to be wrong', he was speaking a truth, albeit self-servingly.

It has been a commonplace of socialism that it is the role of the State to fulfil people's basic needs and that, for this reason, there should be no role for charities in a caring society. The very existence of charitable appeals appears as the failure of a society to establish a State system which ensures that people's basic entitlements to an adequate standard of living are met as of right. But this traditional socialist approach to the political economy of meeting basic needs has thrown up its own contradiction; the more we assert the role of the State in fulfilling that basic entitlement to a standard of living, the less people feel they have any connection with either the needs or the power and privileges of others. It is a problem of political consciousness.

What Bob Geldof and the Live Aid organisers have done, apart from raising money, is offer people a sense, if very fleeting, of connecting to others' needs as well as the power to ask the sort of fundamental, simple question that rarely dominates in politics: why should millions starve when the world produces more than enough food for everyone to eat? There is, however, no simple humanitarian answer to the question. Mass death by starvation in Africa is not simply the result of the drought or the absence of roads to distribute food. Charities involved in Ethiopia — who have, in fact, raised far more in Britain over the year than the Live Aid concert — recognise that the long-term solutions to famine are political. They involve highly political questions of land tenure

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and the distribution of wealth, of the power and will of the State to provide equal access for its citizens to the market through which the rich, when afflicted by drought, can obtain food.

This is where the response of the British government to the Ethiopian famine is so hypocritical and dishonourable. Its increased aid to Ethiopia is wholly drawn from the existing aid budget; it is, as many have angrily commented, depriving the hungry to feed the starving. Even more than the popular recognition of human interdependence, between countries and continents, so the government should recognise the economic interdependence of the world's nations. If it confines its economic transactions to dealings with rich nations only it merely exacerbates the catastrophic structural division between developed and underdeveloped world. On top of this, its objections to 'giving' to the Ethiopian regime are nothing to do with opposition to that regime's opposition to Eritrean independence; they are simply that the government is 'marxist'. No free enterprise, client regime in Ethiopia can or will push through the sort of political and economic structural changes which are the Ethiopians' only long-term guarantee of their survival. There is no guarantee that the Ethiopian government will accomplish such reforms either — but to starve them of the possibility is to collude in the famine. □

Who runs the White House?

US PRESIDENTS and the White House staff who serve and depend on them guard their powers as jealously as any despot. President Johnson used to tell of a recurring nightmare in which he sat paralysed, unable to move or speak, while his aides acted as President in his place. He knew that Woodrow Wilson had been in that position while his wife and a handful of her confidantes concealed his incapacity for months and ran the government themselves. The 25th Amendment to the Constitution took effect in 1967 to prevent that situation arising again, but Johnson himself took no chances. He acted as his own Chief of Staff, and never allowed his staff the confidence to think they could act in his name without his precise say-so. None of the presidents that have followed Johnson has been as careful as he was; clearly some have been more careless than others.

In President Reagan's case, his mental capacities have long been in doubt, and the concomitant power of his subordinates to think, decide, and act in his name has been accepted by Americans as if that were normal, constitutional and right. There is thus something both ludicrous and disquieting about the way in which the President's handlers tried to evade the requirements of the 25th Amendment in the brief transfer of power that occurred during Mr Reagan's operation and recovery from anaesthesia, and now promote the well-used fiction that the President is uncommonly alert and wittily in charge. While in Britain bowel cancer specialists have stated, as politely as they could, that Reagan cannot possibly be in a fit state of health to govern a country, Reagan's doctors (all government employees) have done all they could, despite the unpleasant facts of bowel cancer, to make this superman fiction appear credible. Thus the very danger the 25th Amendment was drafted to avoid has re-appeared.

If the President's handlers have the power to guide his signature on the page to retain and delegate his power, who is in a position to prevent manipulation of the medical and (just as important in a case like this) psychological evidence that the President is, in the words of the 25th Amendment, 'unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office'? Given the limited way in which the White House has arranged Mr Reagan's duties to date, so long as he can read his lines before a camera there will justification for his refusing to abide by the Constitution.

The way White House judgements on this point can be swayed by ambition was all too clear at the time of the attempted assassination in 1981. There are now public questions over whether the delay since May 1984 in identifying and removing the President's malignancy stemmed from the political calculation that the President could not risk knowledge of his potential cancer in the last months of his re-election campaign. That at least was a calculation the President — if he understood the medical risks he was running — was personally responsible for. But unless you are willing to believe the Superman myths that Donald Regan, the White House Chief of Staff, Nancy Reagan, and their subordinates are presently weaving around the President in his recovery room, you have to wonder whether the interests of the United States and the rest of the world are being served by the crowd of stand-ins passing on titbits of Mr Reagan's pluck.

There have always been doubts about the President's fitness to be in charge. With Congress in full retreat from every one of its responsibilities to control White House war-making, the question of the President's medically obvious incapacity merely dramatizes what should have concerned more Americans, more members of Congress, and more of America's friends and allies abroad before this. Following Mr Donald Regan's appointment as Chief of Staff, the *New Statesman* commented last January on the possibility the White House would become 'a ghost ship with Donald Regan at the wheel'.

At the Senate hearing on his nomination as Chief of Staff, his apparent lack of scrupulousness in the way he had interpreted the tax laws affecting his brokerage business came under scrutiny. But these worries were minor compared with the need for a competent head of the Administration. For the US president has never been that, and since his re-election has been increasingly pre-occupied with his public relations role, regardless of economic or foreign policy realities. What the US is losing in President Reagan's illness is not therefore a head in control of the Administration but a face masking the disagreeable consequence of many of his policies. □

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SCOTS LAW MAKES A BAD DEATH LOOK WORSE

THE LORD ADVOCATE'S office in Edinburgh has refused to hold an inquest into the bizarre death of a leading Scottish anti-nuclear lawyer. William McCrae, 61, vice-chair of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and a prominent opponent of the Scottish nuclear programme, was found dead in his car on a remote highland moor three months ago. He had been shot once in the side of the head, but his small handgun was found several yards from the car at the bottom of a stream. TIM TATE tells the latest odd story of a nuclear protestor's demise

SCOTLAND has no network of coroners' courts and no automatic public examination of the causes of non-natural death. Instead the Lord Advocate, a government law officer, has the discretion to call a Fatal Accident Enquiry, undertaken by a procurator fiscal and presented in a sheriff's court.

But the handling of the McCrae case has been almost as bizarre as the circumstances of his death, and has led to allegations that the law officers are at worst covering-up the convenient death of a successful anti-nuclear campaigner or at best doing nothing to dispell that impression.

Energetic campaigner

McCrae had led the successful opposition to nuclear waste dumping in the Mulwharcar Hills, Ayrshire, during 1980; his Glasgow practice had been investigated by Strathclyde Special Branch after he had acted for Scottish nationalist and republican groups arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; and colleagues insist he would have been deeply involved in opposing plans to process nuclear waste at Dounreay.

The circumstances of his death, coupled with a refusal either to hold an enquiry or to release details of the manner of death, have fuelled three months of intense speculation.

SATURDAY 6 APRIL: McCrae's maroon Volvo 244 is found 60 yards off the lonely A87 Invergarrie to Kyle of Lochalsh road, Invernesshire, by an Australian tourist. He immediately flags down a car driven by Dundee SNP councillor David Coutts — an old friend of McCrae.

Coutts notices a wound and a lot of blood on McCrae's left temple. A doctor travelling with him certifies McCrae as 'brain dead'. Coutts doesn't realise McCrae has been shot, but is later adamant there was no gun inside the car. Several yards away, however, he finds McCrae's watch, cheque cards and a pile of documents 'fairly meticulously ripped up'.

McCrae is eventually taken to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary where a gunshot wound is discovered. A subsequent search for a gun turns up a small pistol at the bottom of a stream several yards from the car.

'Nothing suspicious'

TUESDAY 9 APRIL: Inverness procurator fiscal Thomas Aitchison, announces the results of 'a full enquiry — there is no suspicious circumstance'. He refuses to reveal the cause of death or any other details. He doesn't disclose the existence of a gunshot wound.

THURSDAY 24 APRIL: The *Glasgow Herald* prints a copy of the death certificate. It shows 'gunshot wound of head' (*sic*) as the cause of death. Fiscal Aitchison repeats his previous statement: 'no suspicious circumstances'.

WEDNESDAY 1 MAY: The first of a stream of criticisms of the fiscal's attitude — and apparent decision not to recommend a fatal accident enquiry — is written by a close friend of McCrae, Anthony Kerr. 'As a rule people who kill themselves do not throw the pistol into a burn. They also in general do not find time to shred their cheque books and papers. If the authorities wish to retain any sort of credibility a much more thorough investigation is required.'

The fiscal makes no public comment but it emerges he is pinning his belief in suicide on suggestions that McCrae was 'melancholic' at the prospect of a second drink-driving conviction inside a year.

During May, Aitchison and the Lord Advocate's office agree to quietly re-open the investigation into McCrae's death. Witnesses are re-interviewed, and a report drawn up for McCrae's only relative, his brother Fergus, and the Scottish law officers.

MONDAY 1 JUNE: The Crown Office, Edinburgh announces the results of fiscal Aitchison's investigations: 'This report has been considered by Crown counsel who is satisfied there are no circumstances to warrant criminal proceedings.' It also rules that, since Fergus McCrae has 'expressed satisfaction with the extent of that investigation' there is to be no fatal accident enquiry.

Dave Leadbetter, joint organiser of the monitoring group Inquest said: 'The Crown office statement is extremely odd. No-one was asking for criminal proceedings, simply a fatal accident enquiry. And under Scottish law the relative's opinions are irrelevant to the decision.

'This case shows up the urgent need for an automatic enquiry system. There may be nothing untoward here — but the past three months dithering has made it seem as though there is something to hide.'

Community split

The McCrae case has also divided the nationalist community. Some SNP members including councillor Coutts, are demanding a full and public airing of the facts. Others, including the chair of McCrae's Ross & Cromarty constituency party, Rob Gibson, want the issue buried.

'I believe Willie McCrae committed suicide. Other people don't — but then if you have seen the Karen Silkwood film you don't always believe things like that.'

Fiscal Aitchison and the Crown Office have no comment to make. There are no plans to publish the fiscal's investigation findings. ●

Glasgow Herald

William McCrae — just this once, English law would have thrown more light on a dark corner.

Rumour of convoy fatality

THERE ARE persistent but unconfirmed rumours that someone was killed during the police action against the peace convoy at Cholderton on 1 June. Attempts to discover the truth of this have revealed that one person was taken to Salisbury general hospital in a serious condition, but has now recovered and been released; and another man who was taken first to Portsmouth police station was then taken to Nottingham where he was wanted on other charges. *If anyone has any further information could they contact Polly Woolley c/o the* New Statesman. ●

'Newham 7' defendant to sue over his eye-injury

*PERVAIZ KHAN, the 17-year-old Asian youth who appeared in court with a black eye early on in the 'Newham 7' proceedings (*NS *31 May and 5 July), and claimed he'd been beaten by officials inside the Old Bailey, is to sue the Home Office.*

He's been waiting for the main trial to finish before taking up the case. Last week he and two others were convicted of 'affray' in relation to incidents in 1984. He understands that the police are making an 'internal enquiry' into the circumstances of his injury — but hasn't much faith in it. The Home Office, contacted by the NS*, says a departmental enquiry is being held into the incident.*

On his own account he was attacked when he refused to eat a pork-pie in the Old Bailey cells while waiting for trial in May this year. He says he went to the gate of his cell and told the guard he couldn't eat meat unless it was Halal.

The guard, he claims, then shouted back at him saying that he had already caused them enough trouble, caught hold of him and started beating him up. When he resisted, says Pervaiz, 15 others joined the guard and 'they all gave me a severe beating and threw me back in the cell'.

'Before we were to be produced in the court, a high ranking police official approached me and asked me "to be nice" and wash my face. But I refused. I said, I will go like this.' When Pervaiz demanded to see his solicitor he was told she wasn't in court, though he later gathered that in fact she was.

Pervaiz was born in Newham in 1967 after his father, who was in the British Indian army and fought in the Second World War, settled down in London. He has lived here since then and has only been to Pakistan once, when he was six. But now he and his brother, Zafar, are going back to Pakistan: 'At least there we should be able to relax in a more friendly atmosphere'.

Pervaiz thinks 'Asians don't stick together — that's why we're more vulnerable to racial attacks. We should learn from the West Indians who stay together and fight back'.

The older generation of the Asians, he says, 'are much too nice. They take all sorts of insults and physical abuse without even complaining. But the new generation is different. The situation is changing now. More and more young people want to fight back against racism'.

Anwar Iqbal

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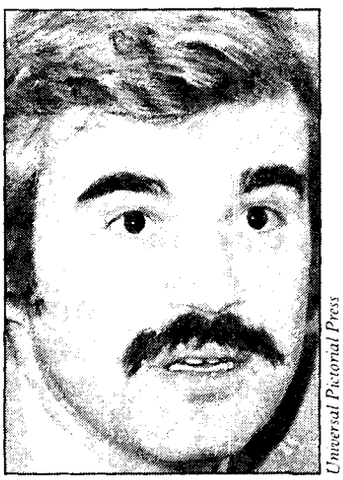
Jangling discords hit the ballad of Peckham Labour

SENIOR national Labour Party officials seem almost certain to intervene shortly in the affairs of Southwark council and Peckham Labour Party, amid allegations that moderate councillors have been intimidated and threatened with violence, and that local manual union officials have undue influence in the borough's politics.

At least three local councillors have written to Larry Whitty, Labour's General Secretary, asking him to initiate an enquiry.

The control of Peckham Labour Party, which has strong links with Southwark's Labour group, is the subject of a struggle between 'moderates' (which doesn't, in this context, mean right wing), and ultra-left 'workerists'.

Leslie Lodge, the party secretary and a moderate, is alleged to have



Universal Pictorial Press

Another squawling baby for Larry's capacious lap

been subjected to a campaign of abuse and threats, and there are moves to get her out of office. Lodge's main offence is to have beaten Ann Goss, a leading workerist, in recent elections for the secretaryship.

Goss and her husband Tony (who is after the Peckham seat, currently held by Harriet Harman) lead the workerists in a sort of homegrown version of Militant. Militant-style politics are evident in Southwark council — which has just proposed giving £30,000 to a Militant front for a one day 'youth festival'.

Weird bedfellows

The workerists have formed an alliance, in the aftermath of the rate-capping debacle, with the old right against middle-class intellectuals. In fact, Ann Goss is herself an alumnus of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford (she graduated in 1976 with a degree in Sanskrit) and the daughter of a wealthy Wimpole Street psychoanalyst who owns a country seat in Surrey.

Also in the alliance are local union officials, who, as has been widely reported, have massive influence in Southwark. NUPE blocked an enquiry into allegations of maltreatment at an old people's home, and Chris Thompson, secretary of the manual workers' staff side, effectively vetoed ethnic monitoring of borough employees by producing his own jokey questionnaire (see *NS* 3 May).

Southwark's draft manifesto for next year's borough elections shows strong workerist influence. Money will be made available 'only for posts which will be of real benefit to ethnic minority communities in the borough' — a veiled reference to union antipathy to Southwark's 'middle-class' race advisors.

The race equality committee will be downgraded to a subcommittee, as will the women's committee. There are pointed references to the problems of *working-class* women: middle-class feminists are not welcome, it seems.

Jolyon Jenkins

Court hears of 'indecent chess sets'

ANOTHER delay has occurred in the case of Customs & Excise versus Gay's the Word (NS 5 July) — a trial which is proving even more onerous to all concerned than had been predicted when the 100 charges of conspiracy to import 'indecent or obscene literature' were brought on 13 November last year.

Following four days of old-style committal hearings in London between 24-27 June and an adjourned fifth day held last Friday (12 July) magistrate C.I. Bourke has reserved his judgment until 20 August. It will then be learnt whether any or all of the nine defendants are to go to full Crown Court (most probably Old Bailey) trial in late 1986.

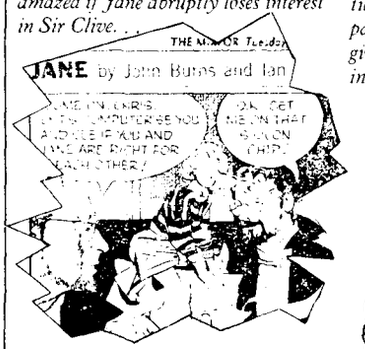
The fifth and final day of committal was taken up with 'submissions' by defence and prosecution counsel, witnesses having already been heard in June. Defending counsel Geoffrey Robertson provoked laughter when he informed the magistrate that the 1876 law now brought against Gay's the Word was originally passed by a Victorian Parliament alarmed at imports of indecent chess sets into girls' boarding schools.

Andrew Lumsden

MISCELLANY

Subliminal cartoon (2)

Gleeful predictions by that wholly disinterested paper The Times *(stablemate: the* Sun*) that this June's sales figures for the* Mirror *will show a 'substantial slump' — just one year after Robert Maxwell took over — were accompanied in* The Times *(16 July) by the remark that 'the success of the* Mirror *has become a personal crusade of Mr Maxwell, who has appeared regularly in words and pictures in his own newspapers'. We pointed out last week (NS 12 July) that Maxwell's doings have even invaded the Jane strip-cartoon in the* Mirror *— open references to Maxwell bailing out Sir Clive Sinclair — leaving readers without any refuge at all from horrid reminders of who's in charge. Since last week, Jane has imagined losing all her clothes inside a computer while Sir Clive Sinclair bores on about 'We take computers for granted these days, Jane, they're everywhere etc etc etc'. But, lo!,* headlines *15 July, 'Hoover may sue Sinclair for £1.5 million', and 'negotiations are still continuing with Mr Maxwell on the details of the take-over of Sinclair Research. . .' Don't be amazed if Jane abruptly loses interest in Sir Clive. . .*



Penalties of fame. . .

The wages of political advance are a fiercer media glare, as the Alliance parties are going to find at their September conferences. Divisions may surface on the very first day of the SDP conference at Torquay, when popular Roman Catholic president, Shirley Williams is expected to be embroiled in arguments with Polly Toynbee and more radical feminists over medical advice to under-16s. Owen's prime desire, to make the SDP receptive to disenchanted younger Tory-voting executives, will be resisted again by the 'Limehouse Group' led by gentle but firm ex-Labourites Lord (Michael) Young of Dartington (founder of the Consumers Association) and Evan Luard (former Labour MP for Oxford). They want the SDP to be an anti-Conservative, Tawney-type social democratic party, not an upmarket version of the US Democratic Party. But defence will be the main issue on which the glare will focus because Owen and Steel — an orthodox pro-NATO man — have tried to use a nuclear freeze on further cruise sitings as a way of papering over the inter-Alliance cracks. This is virtually certain to be ripped to shreds at the Liberal Assembly at Dundee, where Liberal unilateralists are again expected to be dominant. The difficulty of papering over cracks on such contentious issues as Ireland was again illustrated this week, when a press conference on a joint report on Northern Ireland had to be abandoned. The arguments — over reunification, the withdrawal of British troops and plastic bullets — are precisely these which split Labour activists.

Fine body of men

'If it ticks don't touch it, it's probably a bomb'. Rest assured, sickbed Ronnie, we Brits are doing our bit in safeguarding your countrypersons against world terrorism. The pithy advice above is being handed out by all the earnest host-country lawyers who are charged with shepherding 20,000 American lawyers and their partners round the UK for a week's holiday — oh, ah, um, sorry, not for a holiday, for the London session of the American Bar Association. Anything ticking is much more likely to be a pacemaker than an incendiary device, given the US Bar's famous self-indulgence.

Colin Wheeler

New newspaper please

Where *does* the *Guardian* dig them up? 'Channels clogged by the pop world's bash to raise a billion pounds for aids, or hunger, or whatever. . .' (Tuesday 16 July) and 'There are more good fairies in the Greenpeace saga than there are in a gay disco. . .' (Wednesday 17 July). Both from what is usually Alan Rusbridger's *Diary*, but this week has fallen into the hands of one John Cunningham, who's showing a talent for a more odious turn of phrase than Lynda Lee-Potter, and that's putting him into a very high class of competition indeed. Add *Guardian* star writer Terry Coleman's right-of-young-fogeydom piece on the Live Aids concert this Monday — cause of outrage in the *Guardian* letters page — and what do you get? Death of a liberal paper?

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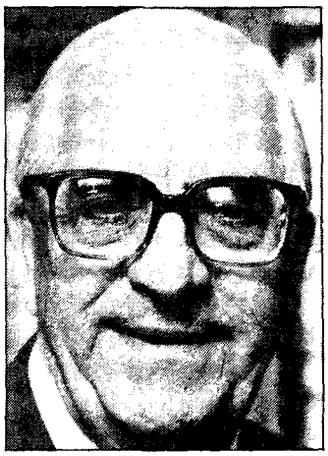
Under starter's orders

RACE FOR CHIEF WHIP

IRONICAL CHANCE: in the very week that former Labour Chief Whip Bob Mellish was taking his seat in the Lords, names were being canvassed among Labour MPs for a successor to *his* successor, Michael Cocks. ANDREW ROTH ruminates on the odds



City Syndication

Moving up on the rails, Jack Dormand, as Hogg and Foster's stride shortens

THE PROPOSAL from the *Guardian*'s political editor, Ian Aitken, that ex-Whip Jack Dormand *(Easington)* be persuaded to give up his chairmanship of the PLP to become Chief Whip has been welcomed enthusiastically from the soft Left to Solidarity.

Dormand, the radical educator son of a Durham miner who replaced Manny Shinwell at Easington 15 years ago, is very widely popular and trusted as a transparently honest and capably nice man, possibly the only one fully up to the job. Only his pro-NATO sympathies and membership of the British Atlantic Committee might be seen as an obstacle by the hard Left.

The election of Dormand, a Northeasterner, might soften the blow to Neil Kinnock if his private preference and his PPS Derek Foster *(Bishop Auckland)* is rejected. A quiet and sympathetic Salvationist who doesn't blow his own trumpet, Foster has also been a Whip. What is in doubt is his toughness and tactical guile.

Until Dormand's name surfaced, many shrewd observers backed the promotion of the present Deputy Chief Whip, bland-seeming Norman Hogg *(Cumbernauld)*. With the backing of Scottish Labour MPs, who make up a fifth of the PLP, he won the 1983 post for his present post when hard Left supporters switched to him after the defeat of Margaret Beckett, to ensure the defeat of moderate Don Concannon, then the scourge of the Provos after his Ministerial tour of duty in Northern Ireland.

Hogg has seemed successful in office, showing an ability to defuse even Eric Heffer when leading a pro-miner demonstration by the Campaign Group.

When they vote for their new Chief Whip in October, Labour MPs will know the job is a different kettle of fish from the days when Bob Mellish disarmed a revolt of Welsh Labour MPs by throwing kisses at them in the Chamber. ●

Poor money supply means worse water supply

FURTHER EVIDENCE of the threat to public health caused by current spending limits on the water industry (*NS* 10 August 1984 and 1 March 1985) is emerging as authorities under financial pressure seek exemption from new EEC drinking water standards supposed to come into force this Thursday 18 July. STEPHEN JOSEPH reports

DESPITE publicity already given to excessive lead, aluminium and other levels in water supplies in many areas some water authorities are being forced to seek *derogation* (exemption) from the EEC directives, or at least delays.

Particular concern is being aroused by the Thames Water Authority (TWA's) application for exemption from meeting EEC-set nitrite levels in London. Community and environmental groups believe nitrite is more hazardous, and more widespread, than the TWA's finances allow it to admit.

TWA's medical staff have assured affected London boroughs like Tower Hamlets — others include Camden, Enfield, Hammersmith and Kingston — that a 'slight increase in [nitrite] levels will have no effect on health'. The 'slight increase' is trebling: the maximum concentration of nitrite proposed by TWA is 0.35 mg/litre, whereas the EEC limit is 0.1.

Nitrites in the diet are converted by bacteria in the gut into nitrosamines, which are implicated in stomach cancer.

Small is vulnerable

The TWA's derogation application may in fact not be granted. It has proposed no programme of work to remedy the problem, as required by the EEC. Nor has it produced geological or meterological causes, the two recognised grounds for derogation.

A further health risk is posed by the UK government's application for a 10 year delay in applying the EEC dividing water standards to all private and small suppliers serving less than 500 people. Research in the US shows that small and semi-public water supplies are the ones most vulnerable to treatment process breakdowns and contamination.

Such fudging by Britain of EEC water directives isn't new. The government avoided spending money to comply with an EEC bathing water directove, supposed to apply to all areas where bathing is 'traditionally practised by large numbers of people', by excluding from its lists such areas as Blackpool, Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings.

Trade unions in the industry have become increasingly concerned at the effects of low investment on quality of water and general service and have held initial talks with environmental groups on the problems. ●

For more information contact: Public Health Group, Socialist Environment & Resources Association (SERA), 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

Ban coming on stubble-burn?

FARMERS run a real risk of being banned from burning off straw and stubble if they don't behave themselves over the next three months. If they break the rules as much as they did last year, the government could be forced into conceding environmentalists' demands for a complete ban.

As this year's straw burning season commences, the government and local authorities will be on the lookout for breaches of the new byelaws aimed at regulating straw burning practices. Over 150 farmers have been (or are being) prosecuted for breaking the byelaws last year, when they were first introduced.

Straw and stubble burning is an easy way for farmers to get rid of waste. But the smoke, smuts and ash inevitably created cause widespread pollution. According to a survey by the National Society for Clean Air, local authorities last year recorded over 3000 complaints from the public, with many more going unrecorded.

Straw burning can also be fatal for wildlife and, in a few instances, for people. The Chief Fire Officers' Association reported seven injuries and two deaths as a result of straw burning 'incidents' in 1984. The smoke has previously been blamed for causing major road accidents.

Pressure for a ban is coming from a wide range of environmental organisations including the National Society for Clean Air, Friends of the Earth and the Countryside Commission. Local government support for their campaign is mounting, with at least 144 local authorities and two local authority associations now favouring a ban within the next few years.

The Department of the Environment is sympathetic towards the idea of a ban, but it is strongly opposed by the farmers' lobby as represented by the Ministry of Agriculture. Thus Environment under-secretary William Waldgrave MP does not appear to see eye to eye on the issue with Lord Belstead, Minister of State for Agriculture.

Some local authorities also have difficulties with their farming lobbies. One East Anglian council which suffers a great deal of pollution from straw burning has been disarmingly honest about where it stands:

> *The Council is against banning the practice... Many Members of the Authority are farmers or are associated with farming. They represent farmers' views. The Authority's environmental health officers favour a ban on the practice.*

Rob Edwards

Last week's Dounreay story

Now watch the ructions

IN SPITE of ample opportunity the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) failed to comment before we went to press on the revelations in last week's *New Statesman* about radioactive pollution on the foreshore of the Dounreay nuclear plant in Caithness.

The moment *NS* appeared, however, their spokespeople were busily supplying comments to radio, television and other newspapers.

The tactic was a familiar one: divert attention from the real allegations by loudly denying others that haven't been made. Only those who follow these matters closely would have appreciated that all the essential details of our story were confirmed.

The Liberal MP for Orkney and Shetland, Jim Wallace, is taking up the issue this week by writing to the UKAEA and the Scottish Office demanding full information on the levels of radioactivity of all the particles found around Dounreay. He is also seeking an assurance that no further pollution has been discovered since last year.

Rob Edwards

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ANDREW GRAHAM

Why a U-turn would break up Mrs Thatcher

EACH JULY the Cabinet has a battle over public expenditure. Spending ministers whose political futures depend on it want it increased; the Treasury, like the percussion section in an orchestra, automatically tries to tighten the screws. This year is no exception. However, the timing of the debate this summer, coming as it does just after the Brecon by-election, has focused particular interest on whether Nigel Lawson has (or will shortly) perform a U-turn on public expenditure. He himself began the speculation with his talk in Oxford of a 'middle way' but he has been at pains ever since to deny that this meant any change. Perhaps surprisingly on this occasion the evidence is that he is telling the truth. Let us look at the arguments.

In the Conservative Party of the 1980s any arguments have to begin with Mrs Thatcher. In the face of criticism most politicians compromise. Mrs Thatcher does not. Her natural response is to reassert her original position, frequently more extremely. This alone makes it unlikely that there will be a U-turn on public expenditure.

Two other arguments about Mrs Thatcher point more forcibly in the same direction. Consider first how she is likely to view the opinions of the wets. Their strongest cards are (a) that the electorate is now more concerned with unemployment than with inflation and (b) that higher public expenditure (especially on the infrastructure) now receives widespread support — to which they will no doubt add that such spending would be a cost-effective way of creating employment.

None of these interpretations carries any weight with Mrs Thatcher. Not only does she regard the public sector as intrinsically less efficient than the private sector, but she also still rejects the idea that public expenditure can generate jobs. In the language of economists all unemployment is voluntary — in short anyone who wants a job can find one provided they will work for a low enough wage. As a result she regards it as a mistake to think that there is any macro-economic way of generating more employment. For her the only solution lies in removing market imperfections and in lowering wages — though she seems confused about whether she means money wages or real wages.

Thus on the economic arguments Mrs Thatcher sees no reason to perform a U-turn. But even if this were not the case her political instincts would lead to the same conclusion. She has sold herself to the electorate as someone who is consistent and this image demands that she go on saying and doing the same things even in the face of electoral unpopularity. Moreover, even if Mrs Thatcher is not at the moment persuading the electorate of the merits of this position she has sold the image of consistency and conviction *to herself*. This holds her together as a person.

The second line of analysis about Mrs Thatcher comes from the evidence of the decisions that she and the Chancellor have already taken. Exchange rate policy is the most obvious and the most important example. January 1985 was the critical moment. Faced with the pound threatening to fall below parity with the dollar, the notion of the exchange rate being left to find its own level was abandoned and interest rates were jumped upwards in two crisis moves.

Why did this happen and what does it tell us about Mrs Thatcher? At the simplest level the reason for the change of policy was panic. Just as Healey in 1976 responded to a falling pound by turning round on his way to an IMF meeting so Nigel Lawson's nerve cracked. British Chancellors of the Exchequer appear constitutionally incapable of taking the advice 'don't just do something, sit there!' But at a deeper level the form that the panic took tells us more of Mrs Thatcher than of Mr Lawson.

In the days leading up to the crisis there were clear signs of a conflict between No. 10 and the Treasury — No. 10 favouring maintaining the exchange rate. Undoubtedly this was partly for the regrettable age-old reason that British Prime Ministers feel they lose face when the exchange rate falls, but in the case of Mrs Thatcher the more important factor was that the fall in the exchange rate was a threat to her battle against inflation and this was not to be tolerated. But if control of inflation was the priority on that occasion why should we expect any difference on public expenditure — especially as on this latter issue No. 10 and the Treasury will agree.

MRS THATCHER's consistent emphasis on inflation does not, however, allow her to escape from accusations of inconsistency and confusion in her policy — even on exchange rate policy itself. Consider first the relation of the exchange rate to competitiveness and unemployment. Mrs Thatcher has constantly stressed that her policies have been designed to improve competitiveness and that this is the only way for the UK to generate long-term jobs based on supplying the world market.

Yet what does the record show? The consequence of Mrs Thatcher's first attempt at exchange rate policy in 1979 and 1980 (when the pound soared uncontrolled to $2.45) was the biggest deterioration in the UK's competitiveness in measured history (the IMF index worsened by 38 per cent in less than 2 years) and 1½ million jobs were destroyed — the biggest fall being in manufacturing, the sector most affected by the exchange rate. Somewhat amusing in a sick kind of way is that the monetarist economists who advise Mrs Thatcher believe in so-called 'rational expectations', a view which claims that we learn from the past. If so, Mrs Thatcher herself is clearly an exception. 1980 was described by one former civil servant as the worst year for economic policy since the war, yet 1985 looks like repeating the same mistakes.

In the first part of this year the pound has risen more than 30 per cent against the dollar and by about 13 per cent against the D-mark and its associated currencies. Moreover, even when the pound was at its low point earlier this year the UK was almost certainly uncompetitive with many of the EEC countries (40 per cent of our exports now go to Europe and last year there was a deficit on trade of manufactured goods of nearly £6½ billion — the overall balance of payments remaining in surplus only because of oil and the relatively depressed state of the UK economy).

Consider secondly Mrs Thatcher's views on wages and the exchange rate: when she blames unemployment on the level of wages she must, to be consistent, mean real wages (since no one blames voluntary unemployment on nominal wages being too high). And what does the evidence of 1980 show happens to real wages when the exchange rate is raised? Real wages rise! Thus even in her own terms Mrs Thatcher would seem to be pursuing an exchange rate policy designed to create still more unemployment.

Finally, let us for a moment think about the implications of the arguments above for the strategy of the Labour Party in the run up to the next election. First, public expenditure: here its natural inclination will be to expand. Added to this many groups with interests in public expenditure have been politicised by the Thatcher period (university scientists are an excellent example) and are now looking to the opposition parties for support. However, to meet *all* these demands will be impossible given the dilapidated state of the economy. The Labour Party, therefore, needs to give its support cautiously, if it is not to raise expectations unduly, and only after thinking seriously about its own priorities.

Second, the exchange rate: here any party coming to power will have to preside over the decline of North Sea oil and the already weak underlying state of the UK balance of payments. Despite Mrs Thatcher's protestations, the long-run strength of the UK would be improved by a lower exchange rate. In particular, as the dollar weakens the UK should take the opportunity to move down against the European currencies. □

Andrew Graham is a Fellow and Tutor in Economics at Balliol College, Oxford.
Peter Kellner is on holiday.

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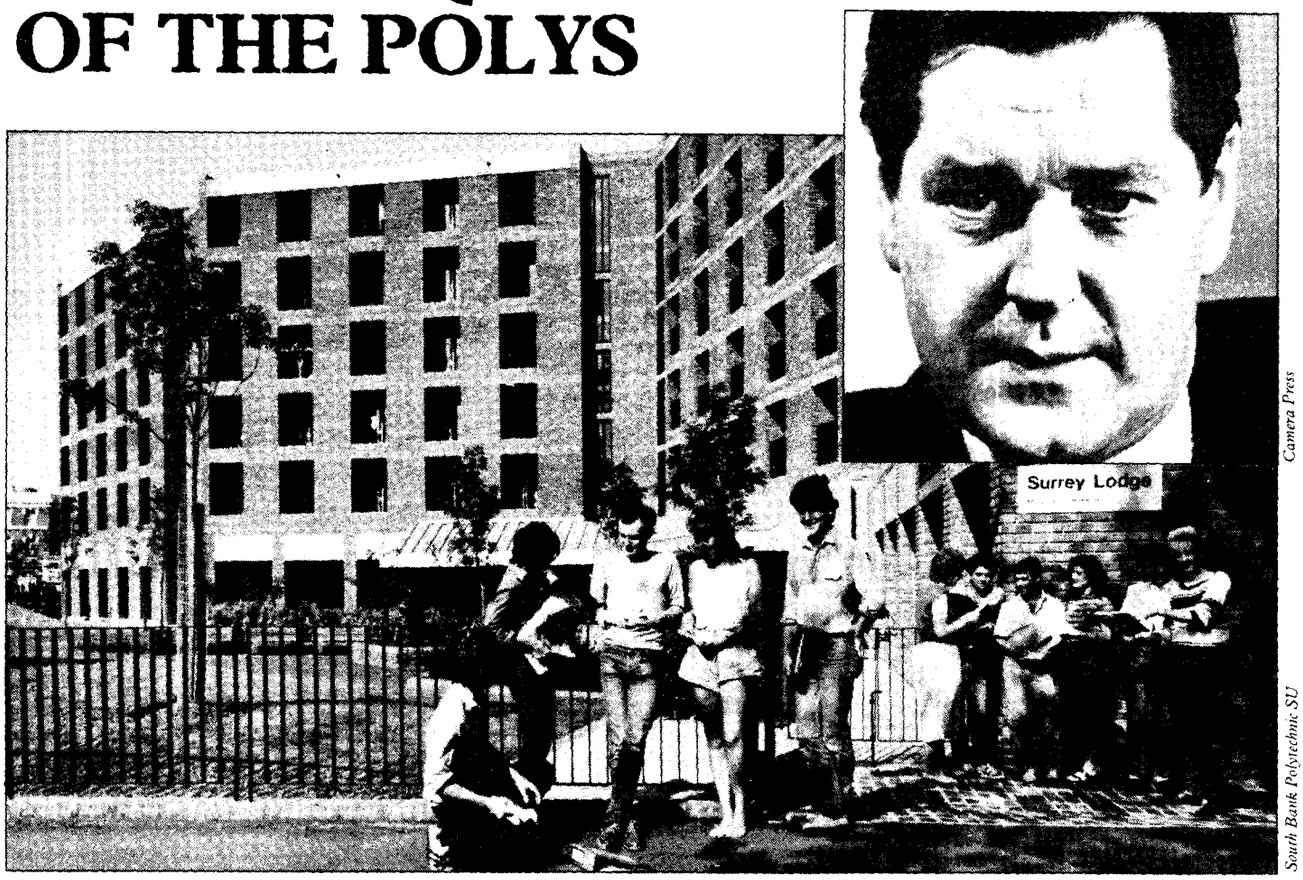
TORIES SQUASH LIFE OUT OF THE POLYS



Camera Press

South Bank Polytechnic SU

Conceived by Tony Crosland, Britain's polytechnics grew quickly in their early years. But they have consistently been denied the nurturing needed to allow them to really stand on their own, shoulder to shoulder with the universities. Now the government is refusing even to take them seriously enough to fund them or improve their status. PAUL FLATHER reports

> On the one hand we have what has come to be called the autonomous sector, represented by the universities, in whose ranks, of course, I now include the colleges of advanced technology. On the other hand we have the public sector, represented by the leading technical colleges and the colleges of education. The Government accepts this dual system as being fundamentally the right one, with each sector making its own distinctive contribution to the whole.

IT IS 20 YEARS since Anthony Crosland, then the Secretary of State for Education under Wilson, made the speech at Woolwich which spawned the creation of the 30 polytechnics. Yet today many of the central arguments about their role and scope have yet to be settled. What is clear is that poly lecturers still travel in higher education as second class citizens — unsure of their worth, undervalued by almost all.

Thr trouble stems directly from Crosland, who in that now notorious speech quoted above also created the so-called binary divide which separates polytechnics from universities. Crosland believed that a 'unitary system' would lead to a rat race, with constant pressure on polytechnics and colleges to strive for university status. He wanted universities to continue their 'own unique and marvellous contribution' and polytechnics to make their own 'distinctive but separate contribution', meeting the ever-increasing demand for professional and vocational courses.

A White Paper the next year confirmed that the top colleges of the day were to become comprehensive, mixed, communities, with full and part-time students, and closer, direct, links with industry, business, and the professions. Since then of course the polytechnics have grown beyond Crosland's wildest dreams. They began with hundreds of students, and now average more than 5,000 each, with Manchester for example ranking among the largest of all UK higher education institutions. Now with around 300,000 students (including part-timers) they cater for almost as many students as universities, but with far less money.

Tony Crosland (insert) excitedly spawned the polys during the bright optimism of Wilson's white heat of the technological '60s.

It may well be that Crosland envisaged that polytechnics, once 'mature', would be granted equal status and rights as universities. He did after all make his speech during the White Hot Technological era, when the Robbins committee had set the tone for higher education expansion, mandatory student grants had just been introduced, and the new 'plate glass' universities had opened. Yet today polytechnics still do not officially have the right to award their own degrees — currently done by the Council for National Academic Awards.

They also still have a very poor public image. A national opinion poll commissioned by worried polytechnic governors last year showed many misconceptions among MPs, industrialists, and the public about their work. Thus 36 per cent thought they taught O-levels (wrong), 44 per cent thought they taught A levels (wrong), and 34 per cent thought they

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awarded degrees (almost right). As Roger Adams of Plymouth Polytechnic, who chairs the polytechnic committee of the lecturers' union, NATFHE, says: 'It may take 1,000 years at this rate before people recognise the difficult job we do.'

It is hardly surprising then that some polytechnics including Middlesex, Portsmouth and North East London are taking things into their own hands and apparently considering changing their names to include the word university. Plymouth, which tried for university status in the 1960s, is apparently trying again, and Leicester is bidding for a Royal Charter to match the City University.

THERE ARE, however, deep divisions about the strategy. Some people, like Dr Ray Rickett, director of Middlesex, argue that the polytechnic is left with no option but to go for university status having made no impression on the public after 17 years. Others like Peter Knight who is to head Birmingham Polytechnic feel it is muddled thinking. 'The point is to sell the polytechnic ideal. No one will give you more money if you call yourself a university,' he says.

But it does not help when Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, and Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor, are among those who do not take polytechnics seriously. A clear snub came last Budget Day when Lawson announced £43m was to be set aside to boost higher education science and technology. It was all earmarked for universities — even though polytechnics like Hatfield, Coventry, Portsmouth, South Bank, and Kingston all run top rate technology and engineering courses. A bitter campaign has now forced the government to promise the polytechnics some new money after all.

Another slur against polytechnics is that they are left-wing havens. In recent years right-wing pundits even invented a new vocabulary — the polyocracy or polytechnocracy — to describe 'left-wing products' of polytechnics. The picture was revarnished during the row or perhaps vendetta over 'biased' social studies courses at North London polytechnic pursued by Joseph. But interestingly last year's opinion poll showed only 10 per cent of the public felt most lecturers had left-wing views, though 44 per cent of MPs and 41 per cent of industralists thought so.

There have been other setbacks for the polytechnics, most seriously in the recent Green Paper on *Higher Education into the 1990s*. It confirmed a grim trend, with Department of Education officials admitting — for once — a clear cut of 3.5 per cent in real expenditure on higher education since 1980/81. Academic staffing levels dropped by one in seven in universities, and one in 12 in polytechnics, while student numbers increased by 30 per cent, most of all of course in polytechnics.

This of course has meant each lecturer must teach more and more students. The student staff ratio has already risen from 8:1 to above 10:1 and is on the way up to a government target of 12:1. All this of course fits Joseph's new emphasis on value for money, efficiency, and the 'special contribution of higher education to the economy.' Future government spending plans already imply further cuts, tighter SSR grants, selective resourcing, and wholesale closures.

Such plans seem auguries of a nightmare that, 20 years after Crosland, the Tories will steer the polytechnics into the middle of a rigid hierarchical structure: technical courses in colleges, vocational courses in polytechnics; and only universities left to follow the great liberal tradition. Already the social studies and humanities lecturers in polytechnics are complaining of the heat, even though everyone else mouths platitudes about their 'worth'.

There are other grim signs. The Green Paper buried a long-cherished claim within polytechnics for a 'common funding base' with universities. They argue they have been doing more than their fair share, and yet been repeatedly cut. Ironically the day after the Green Paper appeared their case was reinforced when new official DES statistics showed polytechnic funding per student had fallen 24 per cent since 1980 while university funding per student fell just three per cent. The figures showed universities would be some £500 per student better off next year than the polytechnics, even allowing for a third of university funds to be spent on research.

THE GREEN PAPER also scotched hopes for a single planning body for higher education 'bridging' Crosland's binary divide. Some see this as another victory for the university establishment eager to preserve its privileges and superior funding position. Others feel there is already too much central direction from the DES and the National Advisory Body set up in 1982 to supervise public sector higher education.

Another sling came in a recent Audit Commission report which suggested there was scope to bring 75,000 more students in to further education without any extra resources. Some colleges, it claimed, could save £300,000 by improving productivity and cutting out overtime and tea-breaks. It has drawn a predictably hostile response from NATFHE.

Union officials in fact argue that pressure of work has reached near intolerable levels with morale low and fast declining. Many of the high quality young lecturers who joined polytechnics in the late 1960s and early 1970s have grown stale and demoralised as salary levels and promotion have fallen by the way. NATFHE in its evidence for its latest pay claim argues that it would need at least a five per cent increase to reach university salary levels, ending the current 'unacceptable divergence', and far more to match other white collar workers. It says surveyors, local government officers and engineers have had increases three times as much as lectures.

Frank Griffiths, who after 11 years at Teeside Polytechnic is to become NATFHE's full-time education secretary, says there is now hardly a break in the academic year. After the examinations this month come the rat race for admissions in the next academic year. While lecturers are forced into more and more administrative work, the administrators are being forced into quasi-academic work like admissions which ultimately threatens academic standards. Roger Adams, NATFHE's polytechnics committee chair, said Plymouth, for example, expected 15,000 applications for 1,000 places. 'We just don't have the back-up to cope,' he said.

Defending themselves has been hard for polys not only because representatives disagree about strategy, but because there is no clear body to speak for polytechnics. Their directors cannot match the gravitas of their counterparts the vice-chancellors. The local authorities, the official pay-masters, can hardly do the job. Above all there is no old-boy network to speak up for polytechnics in the lobbies and letter columns. And in contrast to the great university cuts of 1981, causing a storm of protest, funding for polys has been cut regularly since the late 1970s.

AT THE END of the day the confusion begun by Crosland remains. Polytechnics have been treated like glorified technical colleges even though they grew to national status. Their budgets have been tied to the ebb and flow of local authority funding, mostly ebb, and there has been little or no incentive to do other than degree-level work, the only course automatically fully funded. The CNAA has had to check and validate all courses, a system currently being reviewed. The hopes may have been right, but the binary divide has left polytechnics dithering in the shadow of universities.

Eric Robinson, author of the influential *The New Polytechnics* (1969) and now director of Lancashire Polytechnic, believes polytechnics still lack a proper definition of their role. He is adamant that the myriad rules restricting the role and functioning of polytechnics are 'improper, out-dated, unnecessary, irrelevant, and ineffective.' Certainly the NAB has so far failed to fill the 20-year vacuum, in defining what polytechnics should be.

Tories talking about higher education invariably mean the universities. Yet in recent years, even for them, the polytechnics have become vital to their cuts strategy, mopping up students prevented from entering universities because of limits on numbers. Perhaps they plan ultimately to produce Crosland's nightmare — the entirely vocational polytechnic. It would be disastrous. On the other hand, Sir Keith Joseph could start on the right path by visiting a degree and diploma awarding ceremony at a polytechnic to see for himself the breadth of work on offer, and the range of students — particularly from ethnic and lower socio-economic groups. He would realise the vital need for strong, confident community-linked, polytechnics. □

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DEERKILLERS TAKE OVER

Life on the land is dying as private owners turn it over to 'sport' reports BRIAN WILSON

LAND OWNERSHIP and use are the great forgotten issues of British radical politics. Yet there is something inherently odd in the assumption that socialist change can be built upon the physical foundation of a country that is still largely in the hands of great landowners. There is also a failure to realise that the vagaries of the land market can do more to influence the fate of rural communities than any amount of well-intentioned legislation.

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland continue to provide the caricature example of how such power can be abused. The great wilderness areas, largely given over to what some are pleased to regard as 'sport', are testimonies to long-standing social irresponsibility in the ownership of land. But the story is not in the past: the loss of land for agricultural use in the Highlands continues apace. Hundreds of thousands of acres which could be used for agriculture or forestry are in fact under deer or grouse, bred because killing them gives pleasure to a few. All research shows that this trend is still progressing.

Here is a tale of two estates, which highlights the contrasting options for land use and also the desperate need for the State to accept interventionist powers in order to influence the course of land ownership and use. It must be said that past Labour governments, right up to 1979, have eschewed involvement in such matters with a firmness which has had the Scottish Landowners' Federation leading the applause. Unless some awareness dawns that the land issue matters, and may even be central to radical change in this society, the same thing will presumably happen next time round.

Killilan estate in South-West Ross is now on the market. It extends to 23,640 acres, is of undisputed agricultural potential and has been owned for the past 65 years by two generations of the Wills tobacco family. In many respects, it represents a microcosm of recent West Highland history. Within this century it has gone through phases as a sporting estate on the grand scale and as a well-managed unit, integrating both sport and agriculture, before falling into its present near-dereliction.

In the inter-war years, the estate was run as a sporting retreat for the Wills owner and his mates. This was still the age of gracious living on such estates — money flowed like water and, as a spin-off, there was at least a fair amount of associated employment on offer to the local community. But the second world war brought the hated concept of government interference into this privileged lifestyle.

Murdo Nicolson, who has worked neighbouring land all his life, recalls: 'When the second world war started, a law was drawn up in parliament that land was to be put to agricultural use. Mr Wills refused to put sheep on it, and the Department of Agriculture came in. I think they were there 10 years before it was handed back.' During that period, Wills was succeeded by his daughter who married a local doctor and who, by general consent, has run the estate reasonably well for most of the last 40 years. But, as old age caught up with her and the economics of estate ownership became tricky even for a member of the Wills family, things went into decline.

The farms on the estate are now unworked. Only a skeleton staff remains. The local school has closed and the post office is shortly to go the same way. But, with Killilan estate now on the market, something quite unusual has happened. There has been a concerted local initiative aimed at having it taken over by a public body so that it could revert to being a fully-operative, employment-giving, wealth-producing estate. Iain MacDonald, secretary of the local branch of the National Farmers Union, says: 'We have had a meeting and there are 12 serious names forward to lease farms on it. The estate could quite easily be divided into five units, each providing a family with a livelihood. The lodge could be sold or leased as an hotel and could have the sporting rights. It is a serious proposition. . .'

HOW SERIOUS it is depends on the response of the public bodies, and that means in effect the Highlands and Islands Development Board. When the 1964 Labour government brought the HIDB into existence, there were high public expectations as to what it would do about land. In fact, it has done nothing. To be fair, the actual powers it was given on land bore little relation to the rhetoric of the period in parliament when the Tory shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Noble, was moved to describe the new board as 'Marxist' in concept because of the (wrongly) perceived threat it posed to laird-power.

In the late '70s, under the chairmanship of Sir Kenneth Alexander, the HIDB made its best effort to become seriously involved in the land issue. It put forward proposals to the Labour government under which compulsory purchase would be possible in response to community demand if the private owners failed to implement sound land use policies. As the last months of the Labour government faded away, even that modest proposal was left lying on the table unapproved. When the Tories came to power, they promptly kicked the plan back to the Board with a contemptuous guffaw.

Since then, the HIDB have been positively paranoid about having anything at all to do with the land issue which should, of course, be fundamental to any meaningful development strategy for the area. Their response to the Killilan initiative has, accordingly, been ice-cold rather than lukewarm. They don't have a spare £1 million in their budget, they say. Would they accept that the development prospects of the area would be seriously inhibited if the estate fell into non-agricultural hands? 'If the estate fell out of agriculture, we would like to see something else taking its place.'

So what might take its place? Next door to Killilan estate lies the quite similar Inverinate estate. For the past few years, it has belonged to Sheik Mohammed el Rashid bin Maktoum, a son of the ruler of Dubai and defence minister of the United Arab Emirates. The Arabs are very attentive to public relations. They paid for a mast to improve local television reception. When an entourage of 96 descended last summer, a lot of money was spent locally.

But, in agricultural terms, the last thing they are interested in is having a lot of activity and a scattering of local tenants around their holiday and sporting retreat. Local councillor John Farquhar Munro says: 'Like Killilan, there was quite a lively community. But we will never see a tenant again on the main farm, which is now laid out for all sorts of clay pigeon shooting. As an integral part of the local community, offering employment and farming opportunities, Inverinate estate has now virtually ceased to exist.'

It is a problem that afflicts the Highlands and Islands in general, and foreign ownership is only rarely involved. John Bryden, a former head of the HIDB's land use division who left through frustration with the lack of progress, says: 'Detailed research through the '60s and '70s showed a consistent decline in livestock on estates, and in employment. I have no doubt that these trends have continued into the '80s. There have been various commissions and reports on deer over the past century and every one of them has said that the spread of deer forests must be restricted. But throughout the post-war years, the amount of land under deer has continued to increase.'

The land issue manifests itself in very different ways in very different parts of the United Kingdom. The sporting grandees of the Highlands and Islands may be a far cry from the agribusiness barons of the home counties. But there is a common thread. To a large extent, land use and social conditions over large parts of this country are dictated by the undemocratic power of private landlordism. If that is not enough to interest the Labour Party in the matter, then let us revert to the moral issue. The claim to ownership of vast tracts of land by private individuals represents an offence to reason, as well as a blight upon the existences of many who live under that regime. Saying so just might prove popular. □

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcards, please.)

□ In the end a military dictatorship may turn out to be the only hope for England. The difference is that unlike the Chileans we have the American military actually on our soil. If the Americans should try to overthrow a democratically elected or even a fradulently elected Labour Government by force (and this is not absolutely impossible) an English patriot would face a truly agonising choice: whether to support the Americans or resist them. — *Daily Telegraph* (John Burgess)

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1984/1985 ANNUAL REPORT.

Still on course.

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But the key result from the 15 months trading period is that BR reduced its call on support from the taxpayer by some £50 million compared with 1983.

Furthermore, the underlying trend in our trading results shows we are on course to achieve agreed objectives.

The railway operating surplus was £35 million before interest, the effect of the coal strike and extraordinary items.

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InterCity improved its revenue in real terms. London and South East and Provincial Services improved on the budget set them for government support. Staff productivity rose by nearly 4% after adjustments for the coal strike. Government showed confidence in our future by authorising the £306 million electrification of the East Coast main line from London to Edinburgh.

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The money being invested in BR today will go to sustain an improving railway over the next 25 years. In the 15 months to March 1985, The Secretary of State for Transport authorised railway investment totalling over £500 million. It brings the total investment under way or authorised to £1,000 million, much of it to be spent with the private sector. British Rail buys 95% of its goods, supplies and services from British firms. The Board believes firmly in buying British, provided what Britain produces is best.

The challenge of competition.

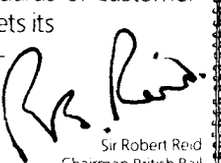
In the last few years we have managed to shift the emphasis from running a railway to providing a value-for-money service to the customer.

But the rearguard action against change ignores how vulnerable we are to competition. We have to reduce costs and compete with the 38 tonne lorry, the motorist using an expanding motorway network, and the deregulation of bus and coach services.

Self-sufficiency is the key.

The railway must become more self-sufficient. We have an effective management team that is matching the competition with its aggressive marketing. But the future will depend on our ability to handle change. The celebrations in 1985 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Great Western Railway remind us that our industry was built by men of vision.

A high-quality railway which is competitive in every respect – price, reliability, punctuality, comfort, cleanliness and high standards of customer care, and which meets its financial objectives – must be our vision.



Sir Robert Reid
Chairman British Rail

Extracts from the Chairman's Statement.

British Rail

British Rail Board Annual Report and Accounts 1984/5. Copies are available from HMSO, price £4.00

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RACIST VIOLENCE 1

SELF-DEFENCE: *IS* IT OFFENCE?

AMRIT WILSON and ZUBAIDA MOTALA analyse the Newham 7 result

THE EIGHT WEEK trial of the 'Newham 7' ended with what many supporters of the defence campaign thought was a sinister and symbolic scene outside the Old Bailey. As the verdicts were announced the police who had kept a comparatively low profile all day suddenly appeared in force. In a few moments a shoulder to shoulder cordon of police had materialised and moved right up to the barrier behind which the pickets had been forced to stand. Victory was written all over their faces.

The jury (nine white and three black people) had found four of the seven Asians guilty of affray, a charge which can carry a 10 year prison sentence. The jury had found the three white men also on trial guilty of one comparatively minor offence — common assault for which they are being fined £100. The four Asians are to be sentenced next month after consideration of social reports. They are appealing against the verdicts.

The Newham 7 trial is the latest of three major cases involving self-defence against racial attacks on the Asian community. For those who have witnessed all three they have been a progression from being exposés of racism to courtroom scenes where racism is openly acknowledged by the prosecution but is somehow no longer important.

In the trial in summer 1982 12 young Bradford Asians were accused of making petrol bombs and of conspiracy to make explosives — an offence which will carry life sentences. It was the first time the reality of being a black person in a community under attack was revealed in a British court. As one defendant said: 'Maybe you don't know what it is like to be black in this racist society. In such a situation the only thing you can think of is the measures you might take to defend yourself.' The message struck home, and the jury acquitted all 12 defendants. From a legal point of view it was established that the petrol bombs were for use against racist attackers and that self-defence applied not only to oneself but to one's community.

The second self-defence trial was of the Newham 8 in summer 1983. Eight young Asians had waited outside a school with a record of racist attacks, to protect the younger children. They were arrested and charged with a variety of offences from threatening behaviour and actual bodily harm to police officers to conspiracy. This last, politically explosive, charge was changed eventually to the much vaguer offence of affray, which demands proof only that the person acused was present at a disturbance. The main feature of the case was the massive evidence of racial attacks in Newham itself. However the jury acquitted only four defendants, and found the other four guilty of affray. They were sentenced to community work.

The events leading to the trial of the Newham 7 took place on 7 April last year. White people in a silver Ford Granada had viciously attacked several Asians at random. Asians then went to the Duke of Edinburgh pub which was seen as a base for racist attacks and there was a fight. Seven Asian men were charged with affray and three white men who had attacked a car full of Asians were charged with assault. Two of the white men were also charged with affray but only on the grounds that they had gone on the offensive when attacked. And as a solicitor for the defence campaign put it. 'The police had obviously expected this affray charge to be thrown out as indeed it was'.

In contrast to the speedy arrest of the Newham 7 it took the police a whole year to arrest the occupants allegedly in the Ford Granada, although they were given the registration number on the day of the attack. Their commital hearing is on 30 July.

UNLIKE the two previous self-defence trials, the trial of the Newham 7 did not focus almost exclusively on racist violence. The most striking revelations were about police methods and behaviour. One police officer after another contradicted himself; discrepancies in police notebooks were commonplace; it was revealed that the Newham police regularly used informers; that one of them had been set up as a prosecution witness and helped to rehearse her evidence. It also emerged that specific Asian youths had been targeted by the police. In the Forest Gate police station 'Occurrence book' for example, sergeant John Gillie had recorded the police inquiry into the disturbances as 'the Khan inquiry' (the brothers Zaffer and Pervais who were defendants and are both now convicted).

The police had obviously hoped to make the case 'non-political' which is why the charge of conspiracy had not been brought. Local police say they were reluctant to bring the affray charge at all and that the decision was taken at a higher level. Once the Asians were charged with affray, the same charge had to be extended to the white youths. They had initially been interviewed as police withnesses. Whatever local police fear, this approach to the violence did help depoliticise the trial; the fight could be presented as gang warfare. The presence of white defendants also meant that black jurors could be challenged by the white men's defence counsel. This is why there were only three black jurors.

But, in charging the whites, the prosecution had to argue in the Old Bailey that racist attacks did and do take place. The jury heard for example how one of the attackers bought a hammer that afternoon to use on Asian victims. The growing number of racist attacks in Newham was used in evidence as was the feeling of true Asian community that the police were unable to do anything about it. They heard too how Roy Lellow, one of the white defendants, seen carrying a pole at the scene of the fracas, was arrested but released soon after, while Asian occupants of the car which had been attacked — victims of racial attack — were themselves arrested and held overnight.

Ironically, the final arguement of the prosecution was that the very reality of the attacks meant Asians should have waited for the police to catch those responsible. It is an argument which the jury have consciously or inadvertently confirmed. Defence lawyers believe that the Bradford 12 ruling on self-defence remains. What the Newham 7 trial did was simply argue that, despite all the evidence, self-defence was not justified in this instance. In other words, self-defence means staying 'in your community' and waiting to be attacked. □

RACIST VIOLENCE 2

ILFORD INFLAMED

Act of terrorism, or personal grudge? ANWAR IQBAL reports

IT IS HARDLY surprising that when someone set alight the house of an Asian family killing a pregnant woman — Shamira Kasim — and her three children in East London this week many people automatically assumed it was a racist attack. The police's failure to recognise the general extent of racist attacks and to regard them as acts of terrorism against the Asian community has made people even more suspicious.

In fact, some Asians living in the same area say they do not believe the crime was racially motivated. Mr Zafar A. Mirza, a community relations officer who lives near the Kasims' house, is among them. Mr Mirza was the first person to arrive at the scene of the fire, alerted by continuous screaming.

When he arrived he saw Mr Kasim Mirza coming out the back door. He was badly burnt. Kasim told him that his wife and children were still inside and asked him to bring them out. Zafar rushed towards the front door and tried to kick it open but was stopped by other people who said if the door was opened it would worsen the fire.

And then they saw Mrs Shamira Kasim in one of the windows. She was shouting for help. They yelled to her to break the window and jump out but she was too confused. She was soon overcome by the fumes and fell back in the room. By the time the fire was put out she and her children (Zahir, 6, Rahim, 5, and Alim, 14 months) had died.

Those who don't believe it was a racist attack ask why the racists should pick one particular house while there were other Asians living in the same lane. They see their area as 'nice' and refuse to believe it can be plagued by violence against them.

Police also do not subscribe to the 'racial attack' theory but they do not offer an alternative. Since Monday, the theory of mistaken identity has spread. At the time of the first attack on this house, it was occupied by an Asian lawyer and it was said somebody had a personal or business grudge against him. It was suggested that the attacker may not have known that the lawyer had sold the house to the Kasims six months ago. The London *Standard* was the first to come out with this theory, ascribing it to

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Mohammad Khan, an uncle of Kasim Mirza who is seriously ill and has not yet been able to make a statement.

The former tenant, Mr Markend Upadhyaya, when contacted by the *New Statesman* refused to comment. He confirmed he had been contacted by the police who asked him not to make any comment.

Asian community leaders and social workers do not believe that the attack was caused by a personal grudge. According to Mr Mohammad Khan, a prominent Asian leader from Walthamstow, where the Khan family were killed in an arson attack in 1981, the police then came out with the same stories of personal grudge, but it was later proved that the attack was racially motivated. They are doing the same this time.

The Newham Monitoring Project said the wall surrounding the Kasims house was daubed with swastikas and British National Party slogans. They said they had conducted a house to house survey in that area and found that other Asian families *had* been attacked. A 65-year old Asian woman living on the same road as the Kasims told them that petrol was poured through her door earlier this year. □

POLICING

A MINER'S BITTER TALE

MARK HOLLINGSWORTH on the police v. Simpson

> Because they saw themselves as fighting a crowd rather than trying to arrest individuals or defending themselves from individual attackers, the principle of using no more force than is necessary could not be applied in the same way. From what officers said, there were many cases where officers beat people whom they were not at any time trying to arrest or disperse. . .and who were not at that moment attacking them
> *Policy Studies Institute Report on the Metropolitan Police, November 1983.*

ADRIAN SIMPSON had never been on a picket-line. Although he had supported the strike along with his fellow 1,465 miners at Hatfield Main, the log-book at the miners' welfare shows no record of him picketing during the year-long dispute. But on the morning of Tuesday 21 August, 1984, Simpson was unwittingly caught up in the bitter industrial warfare between pickets and police. The traumatic events of the day have changed the course of his life.

Simpson's great passion was fishing, and he went regularly during the strike. At 8.20 am that Tuesday he picked up his friend Gregory Knott to go fishing, but as they drove past the pit gates they were stopped by pickets. They told Simpson that two miners planned to break the strike which, until that day, had been solid. Simpson went into the pit club to find out what was going on.

Inside the club he met Tommy Chappell, a pit manager and overman. Chappell, who later received a police commendation for his statement, recalls what happened: 'I asked him (Simpson) why he was there because he'd never been near picket-line before. I had a cup of tea with him for about 15 minutes, and then saw police come out of Pit Lane and chase the pickets. Adrian said "I'm going to see Greg, we're going fishing".'

Outside, a fracas had erupted. Chappell stood on his seat to witness the scene — less than 10 yards away. 'To my right on Emerson Avenue', he later told Doncaster Magistrates Court, 'I saw some police hitting Freddie Close (another miner) with their truncheons. I recognised him because of his scooter-helmet. Adrian then ran towards them and I saw a PC hit him on the back of his head three or four times with his truncheon'.

Simpson says he had ran over simply to get the numbers of the police officers hitting Close. This was confirmed by at least two other witnesses. 'He (Simpson) wasn't doing anything', said James Connor, 'but then a PC came up behind him and smacked him on the back of his head with a truncheon. . .There was nothing to obstruct my view because I was standing in the lorry car park — it seemed to be the safest place to be'.

Billy Gallagher, another eye-witness, said: 'The police charged up Pit Lane and I jumped over a wall and stood by St John's Ambulance. I've known Adrian Simpson for about two years and I recognised him straightaway. . .I looked into a garden on Emerson Avenue and he seemed to be moving away but then a PC cracked him with a truncheon'.

Simpson was then dragged into an alley between the pit club and a bookmakers. Chappell immediately grabbed the First Aid kit and rushed outside. 'I told the police I was not on strike but was captain of a rescue team and could help. They refused to let me treat him and I was chased back into the pit club'.

Simpson also recalls what happened in the alley: 'A PC said to me "You were throwing stones". . .An officer then tried to heel me in the groin. He missed and caught me on the thigh where I had a 5in. bruise. I was then kicked in the face before passing out'.

This was confirmed by court evidence from Dr Kharmus who later treated Simpson: 'I found he had bruising and swelling at the left-hand side of his forehead with a 3in. bruise and swelling at the back of his head 1½in. in diameter. He also had bruising and swelling over the angle of his left-side jaw 3in. in diameter, and a graze with swelling over the front of his right thigh, also another abrasion which was 4in. long on the left loin and another abrasion to his side'. Dr Kharmus then added: 'The injuries must have been caused by quite a severe blow. Since he had a fit and went into convulsions, he must have had a blow to the head'.

AFTER THE incident in the alley, Simpson and fellow-miner Freddie Close were arrested and taken to Doncaster police station. Simpson was charged with 'unlawful wounding' and 'breach of the peace' but was too ill to appear in court. Instead, he was taken to Doncaster Royal Infirmary for X-rays. His wife, Edith, went to see him there. 'Adrian was brought in and walked right past me. I didn't recognise him, his face was so distorted and twisted'.

After treatment he was discharged from hospital, but on the way home his condition grew steadily worse and he had continual

Doncaster Royal Infirmary

Adrian Simpson — a glimpse of a few of his injuries

double-vision. 'I felt as though my head was going to burst because of the pains', recalls Simpson.

When they arrived home, Simpson was put to bed by Anita Gregory, a neighbour and state registered nurse for 12 years. 'At first I thought he had a broken jaw and his face was a pulpy mess. He was clearly in shock', said Ms Gregory. 'I told everyone to keep quiet and leave him alone and then I went home. When I returned at about 5.30pm he seemed alright at first. He was sitting up in bed reading. But then he suddenly lost his colour and began to roll about the bed moaning loudly'.

Ms Gregory twice telephoned the local GP but he refused to come because Simpson had already been X-rayed. She called an ambulance and Simpson was admitted to Doncaster Royal Infirmary at 8pm. His jaw was hugely swollen, all his teeth had been knocked out and he could not see properly. After being in observation for two hours, he was moved to intensive care. As he was wheeled towards the lift, Simpson screamed violently. His stomach jerked towards upwards, he arched his back and then fell back. He had stopped breathing. His wife Edith cried: 'He's gone, he's gone' and ran towards the trolley. He was given emergency treatment to start breathing again. A male nurse later told Edith Simpson: 'He was five minutes away from death'.

Simpson was then taken into intensive care for two days, suffering from head injuries and concussion, which had caused convulsions.

ON 27 NOVEMBER 1984, Adrian Simpson was charged at Thorn Magistrates Court with malicious wounding and breach of the peace. He was convicted and on 15 January 1985, received a three-month prison sentence. He was granted leave to appeal against conviction and was heard on 31 May 1985, at Doncaster Magistrates Court with a Judge and one Magistrate.

Court No.7 heard the basis for the charge against Simpson. According to Seargent Paul Kelly of Greater Manchester Police: 'We were instructed to clear the road and the barricade after it was set on fire. As we moved towards the barricade, we were under a hail of missiles and rocks. On crossing the road, I saw the defendant scoop up a brick. It could have been a pebble, I can't be sure. I fully intended to arrest him and

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so I began to move towards him. I thought he was going to use it as a bludgeon, but then he threw the stone and it hit me in the mouth. He then ran away, but I caught up with him and jumped at him. I grabbed him and we fell into a garden'.

Apart from Sgt Kelly, the prosecution had only one witness, Detective Constable Kenneth Pemberton, also from Manchester. This was his testimony: 'As I was on East Lane, Sgt Kelly was to my left. We knew each other because we were in the same division. I followed the other police through the barricade and paired with Sgt Kelly. I saw the defendant on Emerson Avenue pick up a white piece of concrete. As he moved backwards, he threw the object at Sgt Kelly and it struck him in the mouth. Kelly moved towards the defendant and they fell into a garden. I then went to Kelly's assistance as did some Met offices'.

Sergeant Kelly suffered a cut lip and a chipped front tooth. When asked by the defence counsel how Simpson had received his injuries, Kelly replied: 'It's possible he received the injuries. He may have landed on some stones . . . I don't know, he landed below me'.

It was then pointed out that they had landed on grass. Detective Constable Pemberton could not explain Simpson's bruises, swellings and grazes either: There may have been debris in the garden . . . I don't remember there being a violent struggle. I don't know how he got his injuries to the front of his face. I didn't see anyone hit him.'

The defence called three eye-witnesses and had several more in reserve. None of them saw Simpson either pick up or throw anything. There was also the evidence of Dr Kharmus.

In his summing up, Judge Stephens said: 'Sgt Kelly said he was hit by an object which was thrown 20 feet away. It must have been a terrifying situation for the police . . . It seems extraordinary that if the defendant didn't agree with picketing, then why was he there. What he did was join in a riotous assembly'.

The Judge then added with remarkable candour: 'A lot of the defence evidence has been given to the injuries sustained by the defendant, but this is not the place to decide on that. I can understand why he didn't make an official complaint. Many people don't. It's often a waste of time.' Despite this frank appraisal of the police complaints procedure, Judge Stephens concluded: 'We have no hesitation that this Appeal must be dismissed'. Adrian Simpson, who had had no previous conviction or criminal record, was sent to jail for three months.

Simpson's wife, Edith, has received a letter form the National Coal Board. Her husband, now in prison, had been dismsissed for being 'unobtainable for employment' as a fitter at Hatfield Main. For her, it is the final travesty of justice. 'I just can't believe it. Before the strike I was always taught to go to the police for help but after the lies they told in court I hate them. I wouldn't put a bucket of water over him if a copper was on fire in my back-garden'.

Meanwhile, the Home Office has disclosed that of the 549 official complaints against the police arising from the miners' strike, 135 have been investigated. Giles Shaw, the Minister for State, told the Commons: 'No discipline charges have been preferred as a result of these complaints, although advice has been given to the officers involved in four cases'. □

Here we go again — research phobia

Anne Karpf

EVERY FEW years — and so predictably, that you could bet your licence-fee on it — a puff of rage issues from our broadcasting institutions. Its target is academia. And it's occasioned by the publication of a piece of media research. That time has come round again, as a prominent broadcaster spills his ire over a media study.

The victim this time is Roger Silverstone, lecturer in Sociology at Brunel University, who spent over two years following the making of a *Horizon* television programme. Producer Martin Freeth, intending to make a film about plant-breeding and the protection of the world's plant genetic resources, ended up with a far more radical film about Third World poverty, and the failure of science to resolve political and economic problems.

Silverstone's account of the film's tortuous birth, 'Framing Science: The Making of a BBC Documentary' (BFI) is a fascinating account of the false starts, mutations, and reworkings endemic to all film-making. Its main drift is that TV programmes result as much from the imperatives of television documentaries as from ideas about science, and that these discourses may well be in conflict with each other — a view very much like that expounded by Aubrey Singer, former head of science programmes at the BBC, in a celebrated talk about TV science in 1966.

But what have we here? In the *Listener* last month, Singer reviewed Silverstone's book and, while conceding that it's a 'grippingly faithful record', 'a good read' with 'many acute observations', attacks it for generalising from the atypical: 'The details he has amassed during three years of assiduous observation embolden him to extrapolate and offer opinions on science, on science in television, on television documentary, on the BBC and on television as a political phenomenon. And all through watching one poor producer struggle with his own inadequacies'.

Freeth has leapt to Silverstone's defence, and now Silverstone is defending himself, so he doesn't need me to do so. But the debate throws up broader issues about the relations between media practitioners and their critics, especially academic ones.

Paul Lazarsfeld, the earliest academic to study the media seriously, wrote in 1948, 'If there is one institutional disease to which the media of mass communications seem particularly subject, it is a nervous reaction to criticism. As a student of mass media I have been continually struck and occasionally puzzled by this reaction, for it is the mass media themselves which so vigorously defend principles guaranteeing the right to criticize'.

The history of broadcasters' dyspeptic outbursts against their critics is a full one, including such low points as when the BBC withdrew permission for sociologist Tom Burns to continue his important research about the corporation in 1963 — and only returned it in 1973 — and the outrage which greeted the publication of the Glasgow University Media Group's *Bad News* and *More Bad News*.

There have been exceptions, depending on research methodology and approach. (And some lone, brave producers like Freeth welcome research.) Some might say that the antagonism is inevitable. Broadcasters, like most of us, feel threatened when their professional practices are scrutinised. They mostly prefer to shroud the making of television programmes in mystique, seeing it as an intuitive activity which can't be subjected to critical evaluation. They talk disparagingly of the 'quasi-science' of research, of each programme being different. Film-making becomes a personal creative act, taking place in an ideological and institutional limbo.

But their knee-jerk hostility is also the defence of the professional — similar to the defence mounted by doctors and lawyers. The touchstone of professionalism is that it's self-regulating: professionals have won the right to sanction and reward their own, without brutish incursions from consumers and critics.

And the critics — unless they speak from the Right or the Centre, like Richard Clutterbuck or Alastair Hetherington — want to change all this. They want to deconstruct what's 'natural' about TV programmes.

Not that the academics are above reproach. Some work is shoddy. Other studies — like *Bad News* — *have* overstressed purely ideological factors, to the exclusion of real institutional constraints and imperatives. It won't do to see broadcasters merely as folk with false consciousness, or to fail to engage with the conflicts and contradictions they experience. And there's been a singular failure to feed back research to broadcasters and journalists themselves, or to find out what they want to know. Though researchers shouldn't be media lackeys, simply and uncritically reproducing journalists' values, there may be areas where interchange is possible.

But, in the end, whatever the reactions of the broadcasters, funding permitting (and that's another story), the research will continue. Change won't come from broadcasters and journalists suddenly seeing the academic light, and embracing the criticisms of researchers. It's more likely to result from the aggregated pressure of viewers, listeners, and readers — aided and abetted by academic research which confirms and elucidates their experience. □

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DIARY

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Don't worry, this is not being written from the House of Commons. It is just that in pursuit of 'Kinnock's vision' I've had various letters recently from the Palace of Westminster. Frustrated with their content, my eye focussed on the symbol with which they are headed. At first I recalled the threepenny bit, with some affection. But then . . . a portcullis with chains headed by a crown. This is hardly a symbol of open government. Look at the ferocious spikes at the bottom of the portcullis, waiting to descend upon those impertinent enough to try and breach the medieval atmosphere.

Of course, it isn't really an ancient icon. Though it dates back to the Tudors, it actually came to be associated with Parliament in the 19th century, when so much else that we think of as traditional was, as is now said, 'invented'. But even the Victorians had more sense than to put the ultimate cut-off — this side of the guillotine — on correspondence from the 'mother' of democracy. Suitably enough it was a select committee in the age of Harold Wilson — in 1967, to be precise, the year of Sergeant Pepper and the Dialects of Liberation Conference at the Roundhouse — that put the portcullis at the top of the House of Commons notepaper. Perhaps they thought there was something going on that just had to be kept out. Quick research reveals that each time the portcullis has been re-designed and modernized the spikes at the bottom have become larger and more lethal. Socialists who pass under them had better watch out.

○

Even if Labour loses the next election as badly as it did the last, there may be an interesting flavour to its MPs. During the last few years the Left has made some running outside the House of Commons, the only place, in my view, where socialism will cease to be suspect and begin to be popular.

It seems that many key figures from the peace, women's and black movements will be storming the portcullis. Ken Livingstone and David Blunkett will be there from the New Municipal Socialism. Joan Ruddock should have come across from CND. I'm told that Valerie Wise is also seeking a seat. Chris Mullin is already selected and looks forward to a large northern majority.

British racialism permitting there will be a number of black MPs in the House for the first time, including Paul Boateng, Keith Vaz and Russell Profitt. Their problem is wherever a black Labour candidate's vote goes down — as when Lorna Boreland lost last week's GLC by-election — it is whispered that this is *because* he or she is black. But this is often a scapegoat for a poor Labour campaign, especially in an age when there are few 'safe' seats left.

What will happen to the class of 1988? Its promise is that it will bring unusual experience and strength to the Labour benches. Will its members be incorporated as so many have before? Two of the leading contenders to be Labour's new chief whip are respectively an elder of the Scottish Kirk and a senior member of the Salvation Army. This takes the idea of Labour as a 'broad church' too far. The new entry had better watch out for its neck.

○

I am about to go on holiday. 'Islander' will reappear from Edinburgh where I'll join Angus Calder to cover the Festival. The prospect of a break makes me wonder what the most significant development has been so far this year. I believe that the most important things happen when nobody notices. So it certainly wasn't *Live Aid*. It seemed rather apt that the group chosen to start off the whole show was the Status Quo!

There is a feeling 'in the air' that the balance of power is shifting. Gorbachev moves into action as Reagan has polyps removed from his bowels. Such a personification of affairs is hardly a measure of the 'underlying reality', I know. A fresh wind is not a watershed. But I can't forget the Muscovite in the street whose reaction to Gorbachev was recorded by the *New York Times*: 'I wonder if this means we are going to have to start going to work every day'. The prospect of an efficient Russia gives an extra frisson to the mystery of the international

money markets. Over the last few months, it seems, Japan will have overtaken Britain as the world's largest net creditor as America's position has slumped from over $100 billion to around $20 billion.

○

The diary item that has drawn most interest so far this year has been on New Zealand. Although I was delighted at Mervyn Jones's outburst (Letters 28 June), his charge that I'm a 'computer bore' is misplaced as I've hardly written about my word-box. It is he who is obsessed with the new technology, not me. The call to readers to buy New Zealand products drew a more positive response, including the idea that Labour Councils should have a buy New Zealand policy, although there were some complaints about Anchor butter — couldn't the Kiwis produce some unsalted slabs of the yellow stuff?

But I'm not convinced people realize how threatened Washington feels by the New Zealand example. In a recent interview in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, US Secretary of Defense Weinberger said that he thought the ANZUS pact has been 'weakened very much by the action of Prime Minister Lange'. He added that the 'alliance can never be destroyed by one man's act. But it can be weakened and that's what has happened'. Then he went on to say that the US wants to 'regain the relationship we had with New Zealand'. It can be taken as read that the CIA in New Zealand is not sitting around with its fingers crossed. Weinberger continued: 'We think they weaken themselves by insisting on this basically very irrelevant and unnecessary point.' If it was so very unimportant the US wouldn't be bothered about it. The tone suggests that Lange is a child, perhaps one who should be removed 'for his own sake'.

Islander

ROGER WODDIS

Blind eye

'I cannot even say the Asian community is being particularly picked on.' — Superintendent Alec Ferguson, police community liaison officer in Newham, following the murder of a pregnant Asian woman and her three children in an arson attack in Ilford

What marks the law's custodian off
From such as you and me
Is not the dyer's woad he wears,
Still less the heavy load he bears,
But his unique, albeit weak,
Ability to see.

The half-men who uphold the law,
Devoted to their pay,
While seeking to sustain their claim
To treat all citizens the same,
Reveal what lies behind the eyes
In all they do and say.

The terror that has murdered four
Is free to murder all;
But being careful not to pin
The motive to the victims' skin,
The blue and white, bereft of sight,
Will answer Brittan's call.

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SANCTIONS CLOSE IN

Apartheid is under attack from abroad as immoral, by South African businesses as too costly, and most of all by Blacks as intolerable. CHRISTOPHER WILSON looks at the country's economy

Johannesburg

DESPITE WIDELY divergent views on the possible impact of the American disinvestment campaign on South Africa's ailing economy, the financial community here saw last week's overwhelming vote in the US Senate for limited sanctions against South Africa as a symbolic slap in the face for Pretoria.

The Senate bill still has to be reconciled with the tougher anti-apartheid economic measures passed earlier by the US House of Representatives. But further moves to entrench economic penalities in US law if South Africa fails to dismantle apartheid would plainly mark a new phase in America's relations with its troublesome southern African ally.

Those relations are already at a low ebb. South Africa's recent military raid on a US-owned oil installation in the Cabinda province of Angola and its punitive strike against dissident political activists in neighbouring Botswana dealt a serious blow to the Reagan Administration's policy of quiet diplomacy. The US ambassador to South Africa, Herman Nickel, was recalled for 'consultations' in Washington, where he remains.

Only two sanctions have so far been implemented against South Africa. The results achieved were not necessarily those intended. A partial oil embargo by some OPEC countries was circumvented by import substitution, mainly through oil-from-coal plants run by Salsol Ltd, a company partly owned by the government. South Africa also has a sizeable stockpile of oil, stored in disused coal mines. In spite of a staggering 40 per cent price hike earlier this year, South African petrol is still cheaper than in Britain. Office blocks housing British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, Mobil and most of the other multi-national oil companies still dominate Cape Town's skyline.

An arms embargo slapped on South Africa by the United Nations Security Council in 1963 also produced mixed results. It certainly inhibited the country's re-equipment of its navy and air force, but it also stimulated the domestic armaments industry to the extent that South Africa now exports arms and, like Israel, has been highly successful in developing tactical weapons to suit its own needs.

The US Senate is now proposing that America freeze commercial co-operation with South Africa on nuclear matters, ban bank loans and computer sales to the government and place further pressure on US companies invested here to oppose apartheid more vociferously.

THOUGH THE Senate has taken a somewhat softer line than the House of Representatives, all this comes at a bad time for South Africa. Battered by low prices for gold, the nation's most important export by far, the economy is in the throes of its worst recession in 50 years.

IDAF

Ellis Park, Johannesburg: will sanctions really force change?

Unemployment among the country's 23 million unenfranchised Blacks is estimated at 25-30 per cent and rising. Inflation is running at just over 16 per cent, three times that of South Africa's major trading partners.

Perhaps more damaging than the economic deterioration has been the accompanying 10 months of almost constant violence in black townships across the country — a wave of rioting that has resulted in daily clashes with police and troops and left nearly 500 Blacks dead. As the jobless thousands confront armoured troop carriers in the townships, trade unionists are shaping an increasingly militant black labour force. Black unions have emerged as one of the most effective means of pressure for political change in South Africa. Last year about 900,000 black workers took part in a union-supported general strike to protest against apartheid. It paralysed businesses in the country's industrial heartland and around Johannesburg for two days.

Washington's assertion that a heavy-handed approach to its dealings with Pretoria would be met with a withdrawal into the stubborn 'laager mentality' seems only partially valid. South African industry has long been dominated by protectionist sentiment which spawned a policy aimed strongly at self-sufficiency through the development of strategic industries. But amid the brave official rhetoric, both foreign minister Roelof 'Pik' Botha and President Pieter W. Botha admitted in March that sanctions would damage the economy.

The US, West Germany and Britain, in that order, are South Africa's biggest trading partners. Last year Britain supplied imports to South Africa worth 2.245 Billion rand (R) out of a total of R20.068 billion and took in exports of R997 million from a total of R23.328 billion. The EEC has recently begun to talk of sanctions, but so far the main threat of punitive action has come from America, with various peripheral anti-South African moves by Scandinavia, Holland, Canada and Australia.

South African government officials confidently maintain that if the flow of imports is halted from one country, the gap will be filled by another. Still there is little doubt that any widespread prohibition on US sales of high-technology items to South Africa, particularly computers, would be sorely missed. Imports of computers last year, for example, grew to over R600 million from R398 million in 1983. In addition Krugerrand sales, which face a possible ban in the US, account for 8 per cent of South Africa's total gold sales. Disinvestment sentiment in the US, the most important market for gold coins, contributed to an 80 per cent fall-off in sales last month and helped the Canadian Maple Leaf to supplant the Krugerrand as the leading bullion coin in the US market.

The role of American companies as an engine for change in South Africa is hotly debated, but there is little argument that they are only a small factor in the economy. Although the familiar emblems of American capitalism — the Ford dealership, the Xerox machine, the IBM

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computer — are much in evidence here, US direct investment in South Africa totalled $2.3 billion in 1984, about half that of Britain and also below that of West Germany.

Many US companies operating in South Africa say sales here account for only around one per cent of their total turnovers — *something which seems out of proportion to the* headaches they face over South Africa in US boardrooms — but they fear that if they pull out, other corporations will step eagerly into the breach. Already International Computers Ltd, the British-owned computer manufacturer, has launched a full colour advertising campaign in the local media depicting the defeat of the British army by the Boers at Majuba as an example of what enterprise can do. It appeals to white nationalistic sentiments and makes it plain that ICL is ready to take over where US computer companies leave off.

IF US companies are in the forefront of change in South Africa, British corporations can hardly claim as much. Quinton Hazell Superite was found to be paying black workers considerably less than the minimum wage requirement laid down by the EEC code of employment. The South African subsidiary of BTR, the diverted rubber and plastics company, recently became embroiled in an ongoing and bitter labour dispute with black workers in the rural town in Howick after it fired about 900 workers and replaced them with non-unionists. Two Blacks were hacked to death in ensuing clashes between strikers and new workers at the Howick factory.

British chemicals group ICI has long been involved in a partnership with Anglo American Ltd in a South African chemicals and explosives company, AECI Ltd, which has been plagued by an abnormal number of black worker strikes in the past year.

However, even if foreign corporations somehow proved reluctant to plug the gap left by an American withdrawal, local companies would be almost certain to do so. South African business has been characterized in recent years by a growing concentration of economic power, with five large companies — Anglo American Barlow Rand, South African Mutual Life Association, Rembrandt and South African National Life Assurance Company — dominating almost every producing sector of the economy.

Restricted by South Africa's exchange controls from investing abroad, the giant mining houses and insurance companies began a wave of corporate acquisitions in 1980 in a scramble for assets, often designed to yield strategic advantages in industries not already controlled by their rivals. Over R2 billion left the country at the height of the acquisitive fervour in 1982 when South African companies bought out a number of foreign investors, including Associated British Foods and Hong Kong-based trading house Jardine Matheson.

Alarmed by 'excessive' government spending in the Black 'homelands' and the cost of the burgeoning bureaucracy needed to enforce apartheid, organised South African business groups, including the Association of Chambers of Commerce and the Afrikaanse Handels-Instituut (Commerce Institute), voiced unprecedented criticism of the system this year and urged the government to curb its spending and move more quickly toward reform. The result was a tough austerity programme, which is aimed at reducing inflation, but will unavoidably lead to higher unemployment and escalating unrest among jobless Blacks.

Economists estimate that South Africa needs real growth in its gross domestic product of about 3.5-4 per cent annually to contain unemployment at its present high level. The prognosis is not encouraging: this year, economists predict the economy will contract by the equivalent of one per cent of GDP. □

Steps to sanctions

● **UN Security Council Resolution 301, 1970**
Decided to accept the recommendation of the International Court of Justice that South Africa was acting illegally in Namibia. Only Britain and France abstained, but as they hadn't vetoed it are bound by its decision.

● **Decree No 1, 1973**
Made it illegal to exploit any of Namibia's minerals without the permission of the UN Council for Namibia, set up by the UN General Assembly to look after Namibia's interests. Decree has been incorporated into Dutch law and the UN Council for Namibia is bringing a case in the Dutch courts to halt the use by Urenco of uranium from Rossing mine. British Nuclear Fuels owns part of Urenco. RTZ has approached top level international counsel for advice. Could leave the way open for further action in British courts.

● **UN Security Council Resolution 566, 1985**
Urges member states to apply selective voluntary sanctions against South Africa immediately. UN Secretary General is instructed to raise with Pretoria the 1978 plan for elections in Namibia and report back early Sept. The Security Council is then to meet to pressure South Africa to act quickly. Resolution cites UN charter, chapter 7, dealing with a country regarded as danger to international peace and security. US and UK abstained but didn't veto.

● **US Senate votes for sanctions, July 1985**
— despite a Republican majority in the Senate. This bill isn't as strong as the one passed by the House of Representatives but it is a clear rejection of the Administration's 'constructive engagement' policy. A common version of the two bills will be hammered out and presented to Reagan. If he rejects it, the two houses need a two thirds majority to override him.

● **Sanctions Against South Africa bill passes first reading in Commons, July 1985**
Not expected to get much further given the Tories' policies but at least provides long overdue debate. Seeks to codify in British law UN Decree No 1. Should set the minimum standard for a future Labour government — important, given Labour's poor past record. ●

Mood of rebellion spreads

ON THE NIGHT OF THURSDAY 27 June, a prominent black political activist Matthew Goniwe and three companions left the seaside city of Port Elizabeth for the small town of Cradock 150 miles inland.

Five days later Goniwe's charred body was found on the outskirts of the city. His fingers had been severed, indicating signs of torture. During the previous two days, the bodies of his three companions were found in different places but in much the same state. There had been a police roadblock on their route out of the city that night, and the only way anyone other than a close circle of their acquaintances could have known of the trip was through sophisticated bugging devices on telephones.

Goniwe was leader of the Cradock residents' association, a community group affiliated to the anti-apartheid United Democratic Front (UDF). They believe that a right-wing death squad, possibly linked to the authorities, was responsible. The UDF claims that since the beginning of the year at least 27 people have gone missing and 11 activists have been assassinated. The UDF's acting publicity secretary, Murphy Morobe, claims that South Africa is heading for a situation like fascist countries in South America where opponents of the regimes simply disappear.

The crucial question is who would have the motive to kill Goniwe, a leader who was able to mobilise solid resistance against the government among the black population of Cradock. People who knew him described him as a 'man of peace', pointing to the fact that in Cradock the entire government-backed 'puppet' community council had resigned and found immediate reacceptance into the community.

The murders come against a background of increasingly desperate measures by the police and military to retain control of the situation in the black townships which in some areas is bordering on mass insurrection. Militant youth, some as young as five, daily face police bullets, tear gas, arrest and death but appear determined to make the townships ungovernable. The lines between the African National Congress (ANC) guerrilla war and the internal unrest are growing increasingly blurred as hand-grenades and petrol bombs replace stones as the weapons of the protestors.

There have already been nearly as many explosives attacks by the ANC this year as during the record year of 1983. Violent attacks on black policemen, councillors and anyone suspected of being a collaborator have increased, leading to a breakdown of the government's indirect rule of the black community.

Almost 450 people have died since the start of the unrest in September last year. Most of them have died in confrontations with the police and army — testimony to the viciousness of the state's response. In the ramshackle slum of Duduza, about 50 kilometres from Johannesburg on the East Rand, policemen and soldiers in armed cars launched a house to house search for political activists on Friday 5 July. By the end of the day at least three youths had been shot dead and scores detained.

Even the liberal Progressive Federal Party (PFP) — which has condemned violence on all sides — has warned of the effects of 'undisciplined, provocative and brutal behaviour' on the part of the police. It has been suggested by moderates shocked at this behaviour that the police and military are 'out of control', and that the government is no longer able to rein them in.

While this may be partially true, at the same time the government appears to have no other response to the most sustained threat yet to white rule in South Africa by black nationalism. A parliamentary session — which apologists described as the greatest breakthrough yet for reform — has passed unnoticed in the townships.

The mood of rebellion has undoubtedly passed a threshold which it stopped short of in the two previous milestones of township resistance — post-Sharpeville in 1960 and post-Soweto in 1976. At the same time the ANC appears to be sticking by its commitment to intensify the armed struggle.

Phillip van Niekerk

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APARTHEID

OUTSPAN STRIKE THAT'S TOO HOT TO HANDLE

COLM TOIBIN on the shopworkers who threaten South Africa

Dublin

ON 9 JULY the British Airways flight from Heathrow to Johannesburg was delayed. At first the passengers were told of mechanical faults, but after a while it was made clear to them that there were other problems. One of the crew announced that he was unwilling to fly the plane with certain passengers on board, but that these people and their baggage had now been identified and the plane would take off soon. Later on, however, passengers heard the crew member announce that these same people were now about to get on the plane.

Derek Speirs/Report

Dunne's Stores strikers: seven of the 'most dangerous super-market workers you are ever likely to meet'. Inset: Ben Dunne

The hostility was palpable as eight young Irish supermarket workers, a trade union official and a Third World worker, delayed by South African officials, tried to find seats on the plane. They had been invited to South Africa by Bishop Desmond Tutu where they would celebrate the first anniversary of their unique stand against apartheid.

The eight supermarket workers are members of the Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union (IDATU). At its annual conference at Easter 1984 IDATU passed a motion which called for the boycott of 'all South African goods and services'. Although this motion was relayed to all shop stewards several months later no instructions were issued by the union; its members were simply made aware that the policy existed. The initiative was left to them.

On 16 July this initiative was taken up at a meeting in Dunne's Stores of Henry Street in Dublin at which 19 members of IDATU decided to implement the boycott.

There was going to be trouble. Dunne's Stores, the largest chain stores in the Republic of Ireland, has always been adamantly anti-trade union. It does not recognise IDATU's right to negotiate on behalf of its members; there is no complaints procedure between management and the union; on many occasions Dunne's have refused to attend conciliation hearings. A spokesperson for IDATU has described Dunne's as 'the worst employer in Ireland'.

Observers say that a show down between Dunne's and IDATU was inevitable. There had been several small flare-ups since the appointment of John Mitchell as general secretary of IDATU in December 1982. Mitchell was known to be purposeful and dynamic; however, no one expected that the row with Dunne's would develop over South African fruit.

THE DAY AFTER they made the decision not to handle South African goods all 19 workers were individually warned by management that if they went ahead with the action there would be unspecified retaliation by Dunne's Stores. On 18 July one of the workers refused to check out two Outspan oranges. On being threatened with suspension she agreed to drop the action. The following day another worker refused to check out two Outspan grapefruit. This time, on being threatened with suspension, she refused to drop the action and was suspended. She contacted IDATU.

John Mitchell, IDATU's new general secretary, has a particular interest in the Third World and chairs the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Third World Committee. The man with responsibility for Dublin stores in IDATU is Brendan Archbold, who has been a member of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement for over ten years. Archbold advised all union members to walk out of Dunne's Stores in support of their suspended colleagues. Those who walked out were immediately replaced with part-time workers from other branches.

When Brendan Archbold contacted Dunne's Stores he proposed a number of compromises which had succeeded in similar disputes with other stores. Workers who objected to handling South African goods in other chain stores in Ireland had been moved to different sections or asked to handle the goods until the supply ran out and another supplier could be found. Dunne's Stores did not wish to compromise. Brendan Archbold gave the supermarket workers placards and they began to picket the Henry Street branch of Dunne's Stores.

The following day Archbold asked the 11 young strikers to come to his office in the centre of Dublin. He felt he should spell out to them in some detail the political situation in South Africa so they would know why the union had proposed a boycott of South African goods. He asked them what they knew about South Africa and one of them said that she knew that the government discriminated against Blacks. Now a year later, the workers know a great deal more. Having come out in sympathy for a fellow worker they have become symbols in the struggle against apartheid.

THERE WAS deadlock. All attempts to negotiate with Dunne's Stores failed. Proprietor Ben Dunne Junior proposed last September that the workers be taken back and Dunne's would decide where they would work. This was turned down. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, one of the most conservative bodies in Ireland, has been less than supportive. There has been no effort, for example, to stop other union members supplying Dunne's Stores in Henry Street, despite the fact that the strike is official and has official sanction. The strike is viewed with intense suspicion and dislike by leading Irish trade unionists.

The Minister for Labour in the government of the Republic, Ruairi Quinn, a long-time member of the Anti-Apartheid movement, has also been less than supportive. His answers to questions about the strike in the Irish parliament have been evasive and misleading. Dr Garret FitzGerald has refused to comment. In 1983 Irish exports to South Africa exceeded imports by £19 million.

As hostility to the strike developed in Ireland and as shoppers continued to pass the pickets, support from abroad increased. Within two weeks of the strike beginning Bishop Desmond Tutu was to go to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. On his way through London, he had a meeting with the strikers.

He invited them, as well as Ben Dunne, to come to South Africa to see for themselves. Ben Dunne declined. Since Irish citizens do not need visas to enter South Africa the workers did not believe that they could be turned away. They now say that the South African government did their cause an enormous favour by refusing them entry last week.

'If there was any embarrassment to the South African government it was self-inflicted,' Brendan Archbold said when the group arrived back in Dublin airport last Thursday having been refused entry to South Africa. They are now more than ever determined to continue the strike until they win. 'These,' Brendan Archbold said half-jokingly, 'are the eight most dangerous supermarket workers you are ever likely to encounter.' □

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DIAMONDS GONE FOREVER

An obstinate judge is uncovering damning evidence of the hasty depletion of Namibia's gems before independence reports SUZANNE CRONJE

SOMEWHERE IN its London vaults, De Beers, the world's largest diamond mining company, holds a stockpile worth about £1.8 billion. The bulk of this hoard consists of gem stones from Namibia, where they were dug out of the ground in indecent haste by De Beers' local subsidiary, Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM). Namibia is being ruthlessly denuded of its natural wealth by CDM and others, in anticipation of independence and the election of a popular government which would hold them accountable for their activities.

New evidence of what may be the biggest asset-stripping operation in the world is emerging from Windhoek, capital of Namibia, where a commission of enquiry has been told that overmining by CDM had shortened the life of the mine by 10 years, so that it is now expected to close in 1992 instead of operating profitably into the next century. The commission has been told that the company has been concentrating on getting the largest carat diamonds out of the ground at the expense of the poorer quality diamonds.

One witness, a former CDM employee, put the cost to the country of overmining at R2,65 billion (£1.3 billion) in diamond ore reserves. There had been repeated attempts by the staff to slow down the pace of production, but these were ignored by the Board of Directors as well as by the South African-appointed administration in Windhoek. De Beers had ordered CDM to 'get as much out of the ground as possible before there is a change in government'.

Internal company documents have been produced showing that CDM did order the rapid increase in production. CDM does not deny it, but argues that overmining is a meaningless technical term. During last year's hearings, Mr Justice P. W. Thirion, who heads the commission, said that CDM's arguments rebutting the criticism are 'an insult to even the lowliest form of intelligence'.

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The Thirion Commission was set up by the South African government in 1982 to investigate corruption in Namibia's public life, and it uncovered a number of malpractices among officials, both black and white. But in the course of its research the commission came across much more alarming information about the financial conduct of the mines. Judge Thirion, who appears to be an obstinate man, refused to abandon the subject when he was warned off. The then Administrator General of Namibia, Willie Van Niekerk, declined to expand Thirion's terms of reference to include mines as well as public affairs. But there was the Diamond Board, a statutory body set up to exercise 'independent' control over the diamond industry. Thirion could not be denied access to that.

Last week Mr Fred Roussouw, Agent of the Diamond Board, admitted to Judge Thirion that half his salary came from the South African government, and half from the Diamond Producers' Association, whose Chief Evaluator he was. (The only diamond producer in Namibia is CDM.) His job was to supervise the sorting and evaluation of CDM diamonds and to organize their sale overseas. Asked whether the Board — which is supposed to look after the public interest — had ever exercised its authority, Mr Roussouw said, 'Never as long as I can recall'.

In other words, the interests of CDM and the Board are identical. The chair of the Diamond Board happens to be the Auditor General of Namibia. In 1978/79 CDM contributed 68 per cent to total domestic revenue; by 1982/83 this was down to 10.3 per cent. The Johannesburg *Financial Mail* assessed the loss to Namibia in State revenue from inadequate State supervision of diamond sales between 1980 and 1984 at £250 million.

MONEY WHICH Namibia will need for development after independence is being diverted elsewhere by De Beers and companies under its control. One of these — Putra — which exists only on paper and has a board of directors but no employees, receives 10 per cent 'handling commission', although it never handles the diamonds. Roussouw explained that 'Putra was formed so that profits tax can be avoided in Britain and some profits can be taxed in South Africa'.

Two other major corporations probably have as much if not more cause for concern about exposure. Tsumeb, which mines and exports most of Namibia's base metals and is the country's largest private employer, has paid practically no taxes for the last 10 years because of Namibia's generous mining laws which allow accounting losses in one year to be carried forward for tax purposes, and capital expenditure to be fully deducted before income is taxed.

The third mining giant, Rossing Uranium, which is controlled by Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) started paying taxes only in 1983/84, although its total pre-tax profits between 1978 and 1982 were declared at £239.7 million, and the net profits accruing to RTZ over this period amounted to £89.1 million. There is no independent check on these figures, and the exports may have been considerably higher. Verification of size, type and quality of shipments is not possible as there are no border posts, and the administration in Windhoek has no facilities for metallurgical tests.

Britain has a particular interest in Namibia. It is a member of the five-nation Contract Group, set up to negotiate the implementation of the UN Security Council's plan on Namibia. And then there are the lucrative investments of British multinationals in the country. RTZ is a British-based company and Consolidated Goldfields — registered in the UK — owns a large stake in Tsumeb.

The 'interim' government of Namibia, installed by Pretoria last month, has been declared 'null and void' by Western governments including Britain. However, Sir Geoffrey Howe has reserved the right to see members of the Multi-Party Conference (MPC), the new administration which will be seeking international credibility. The MPC is a grouping of 'internal' parties representing tribal chiefs and opportunist politicians.

One of the MPC's smallest parties, SWAPO(D) — a break-away faction of SWAPO — has now put on record its intention of extending the Thirion Commission's terms of reference to cover all aspects of mining. But such a motion is likely to meet with stiff resistance from the South African-appointed officialdom which still runs the territory.

One example of this was when the Thirion hearings suggested gross irregularities in the mining industry. Namibia's Director of Geological Survey, Dr Roy Miller, compiled an 'assessment of allegations on overmining' at CDM. This month Miller admitted that his work was largely based on CDM information — he said that he had 'no reason to doubt the material submitted by the mine'. A draft of his report was shown to CDM before publication, and he incorporated some changes suggested by the company. Cross questioned by Judge Thirion on his knowledge of mining economics and overmining, he said that this amounted to 'not very much . . . very little . . . hardly anything'. Miller's report was intended to pre-empt the Thirion Commission's findings.

The Commission's chief investigator, Martin Grote, prepared a 700 page document on the mining industry, which is now classified information. According to the Johannesburg *Financial Mail*, 'It is said that if the document is ever made public, it will cause a world-wide outcry because it contains evidence of how some mines have allegedly denied Namibia many millions of rands over the last few years'. That is putting it mildly. What has emerged from the evidence already makes it extremely awkward for the British government to refuse consideration of Decree No. 1 (see box page 18) since it could be accused of wishing to cover up financial scandals extending far beyond the borders of Namibia. □

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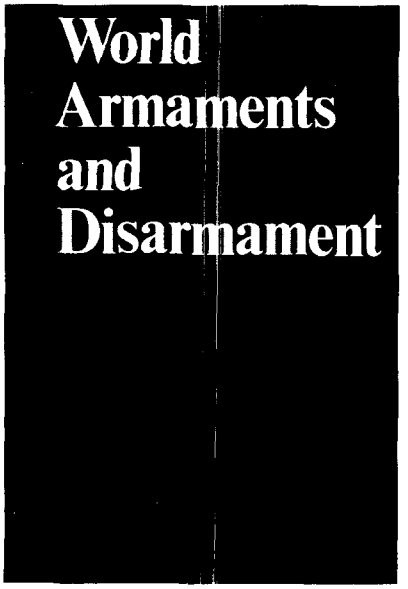

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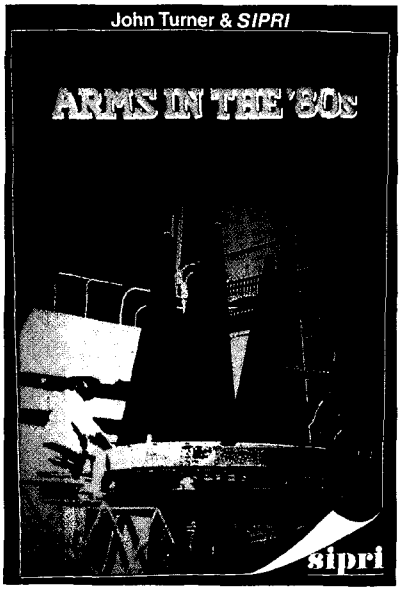

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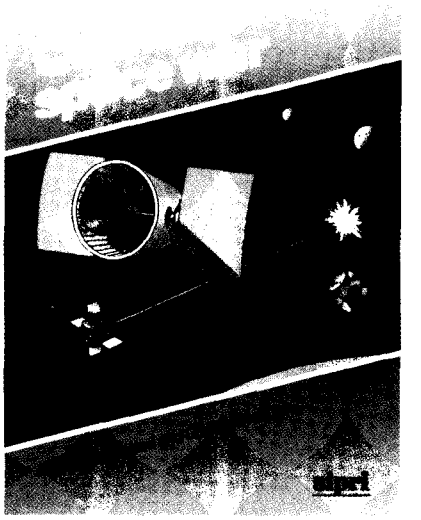

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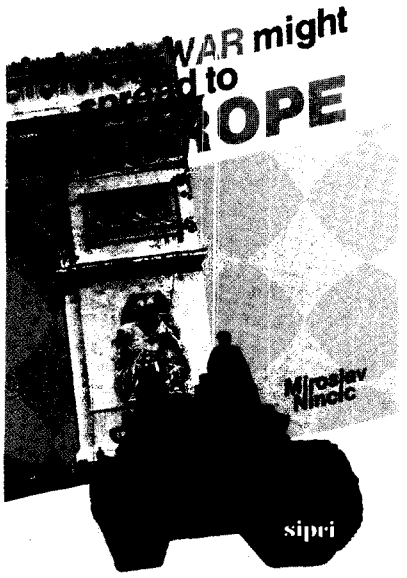

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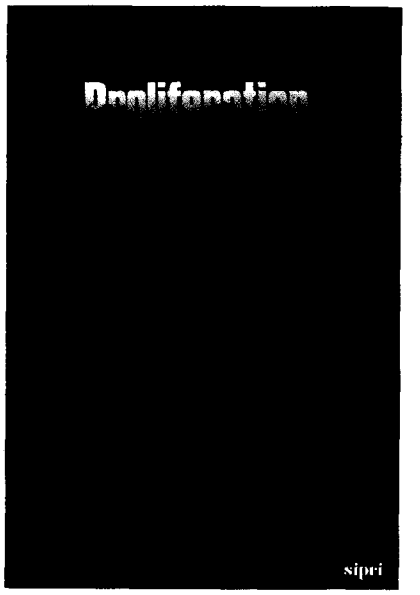

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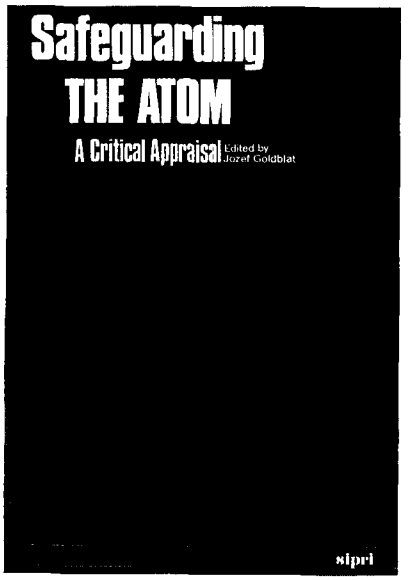

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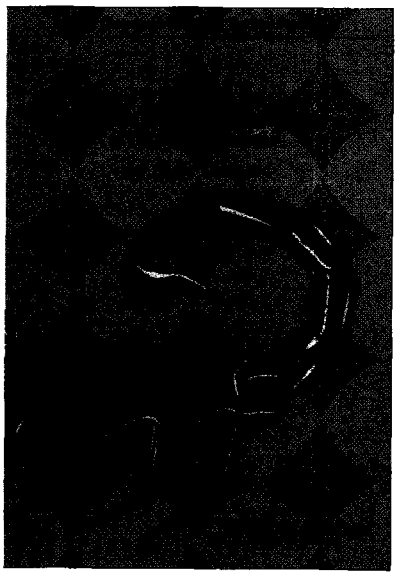

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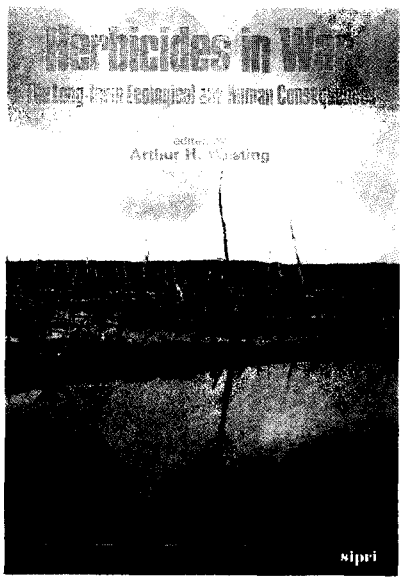

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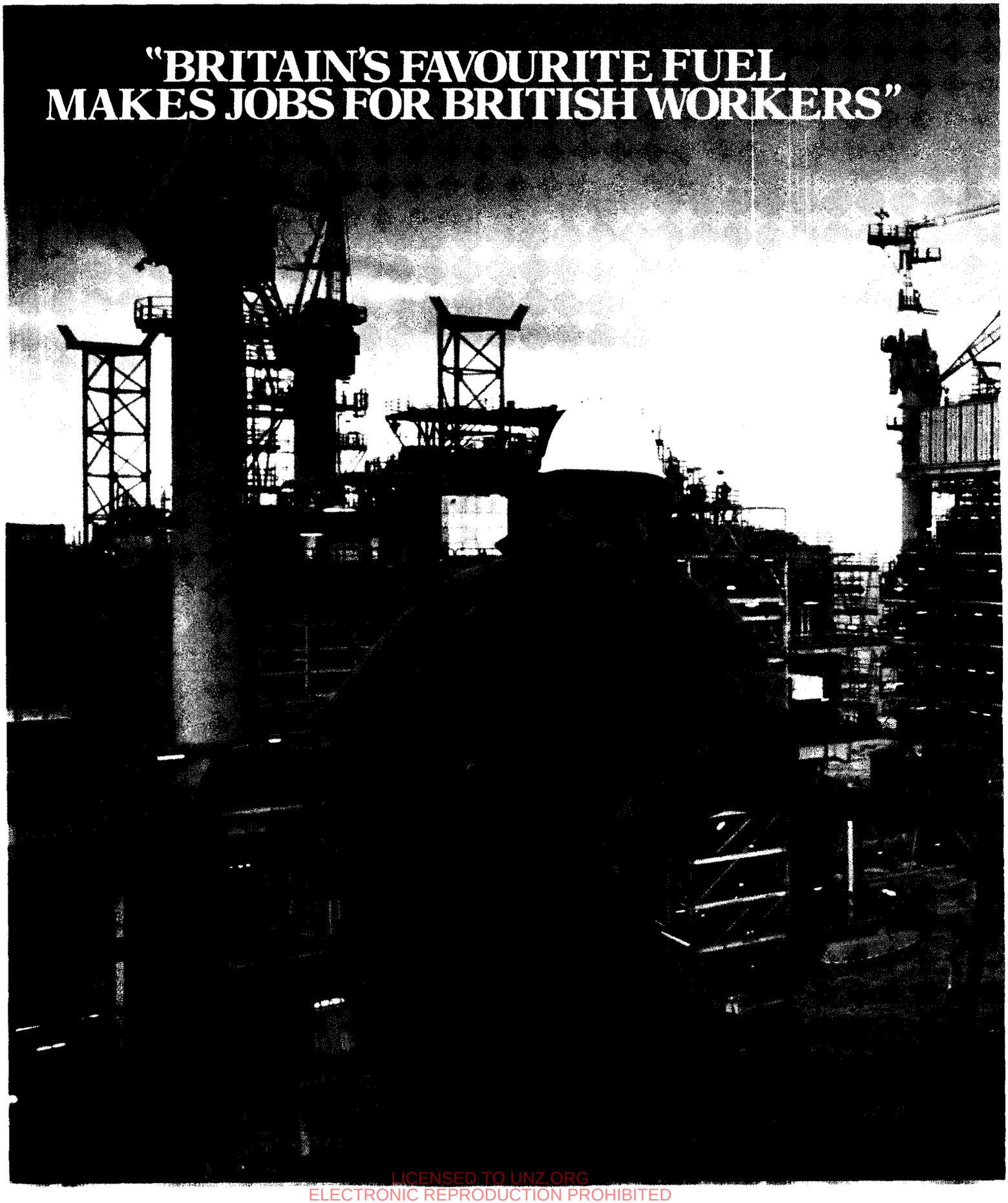

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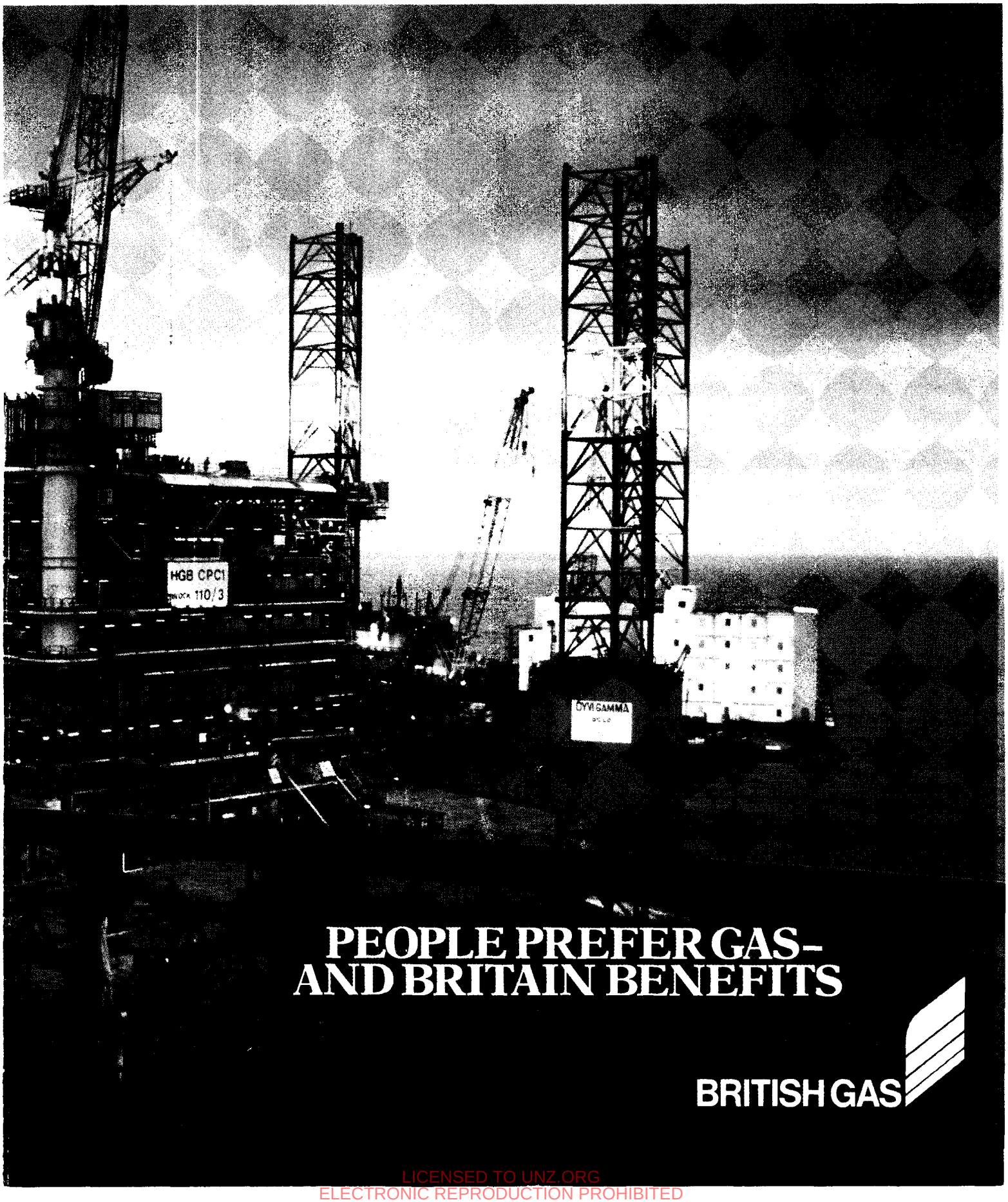

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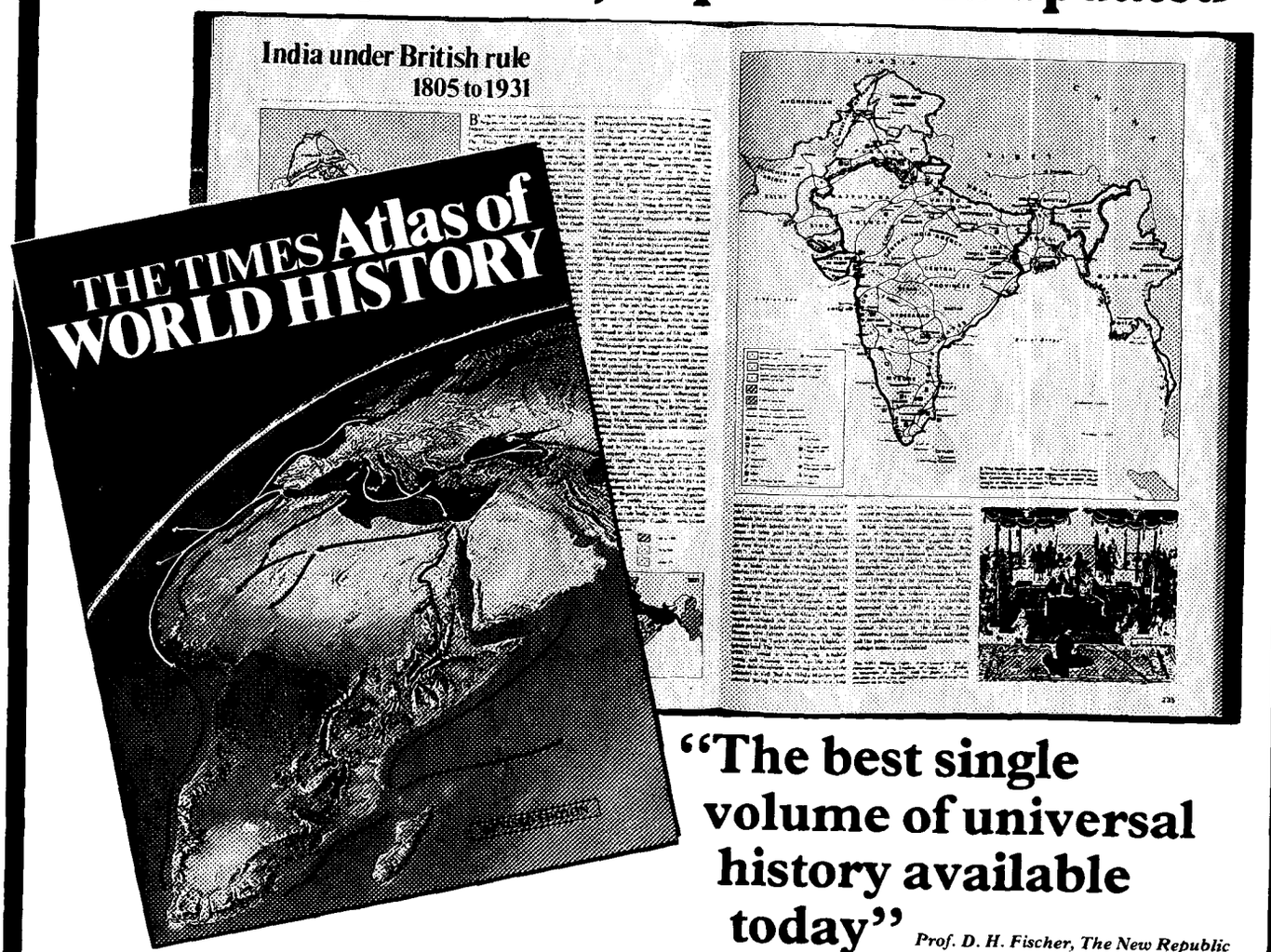

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LEFT FACES HISTORIC BLOCK

Political power has not yet exhausted the ruling Christian Democrats. DONALD SASSOON looks at the Left parties' search for strategies to get that power for themselves

AN ITALIAN JOURNALIST once asked the veteran Christian Democrat leader Giulio Andreotti whether his party was not worn out by its excessively lengthy tenure in power. The Democrazia Cristiana (DC) has been in government since 1944 and Andreotti has been a minister, with scarcely a break, for over 35 years. No other western governments can claim such longevity.

Andreotti's answer became famous: 'Political power wears out those who have not got it'. This exemplified the conviction of Italian Christian Democrats that they were somehow destined to rule for ever.

Until a few months ago, however, the most common assumption was that the party had entered a phase of irreversible decline. After all, the DC had suffered a major defeat in the 1983 general elections (down six per cent — the worst result since the war) and had to give up the Prime Ministership to the socialist leader Bettino Craxi. The following year, in the 1984 European elections, the DC was overtaken by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) by 125,000 votes — ending up with 33 per cent of the poll against the PCI's 33.3 per cent. It was the first time that the DC had not topped the poll.

The DC leader, Ciriaco De Mita, had devised a 'Thatcherist' strategy: he appealed to entrepreneurship, modernisation, fiscal prudence, austerity. He promised to clean up the party and get rid of the mafiosi and the freemasons, who had infiltrated it. He attempted to construct a modern party which would be much less ideological than before.

This backfired. The DC finds it difficult to become a party of austerity, committed to a monetarist policy of containment of public spending. Its rule depends on maintaining and cultivating a formidable network of clientéles, providing employment to many of its supporters (particularly in the South), using the State machine and especially the public purse to service a public sector which is its biggest reserve of electoral support.

Camera Press

Bettino Craxi, imposed upon

To cut public spending would be tantamount to cutting its own electoral roots. Moreover, the Thatcherist option had created a climate which was encouraging Italian private entreprenuers to be more confident of their own strength. Yet this did not lead them to support the DC more strongly. On the contrary, the employers' association has grown more independent-minded, more intransigent in its dealing with the trade unions and does not seek to hide its scorn for the DC, which it still considers (rightly) as the chief defender of the public sector.

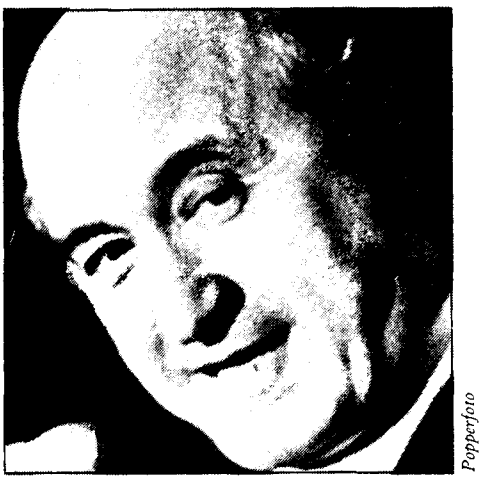
The DC cannot aspire to be the party of private enterprise because it is still first and foremost the party of state capitalism and because it is involved in working-class organisations, such as the second largest trade union confederation, the CISL, and the vast network of 'white' co-operatives in northeast Italy.

Camera Press

Francesco Cossiga, imposed

De Mita not only failed to deliver the votes but also failed to unite the DC. Consequently, he modified his strategy. The enthusiasm for entrepreneurship and managerial prerogatives was toned down. The links with the Catholic electorate were renewed. The DC was also able to benefit from the rapid growth among the young of a Catholic group, *Comunione e Liberazione*, — a populist-religious movement, which has made astonishing inroads among students winning the recent university elections with crushing majorities.

The strategy paid off. At the local elections on 12 May, the DC emerged as the first party once more, with 35 per cent, whilst the PCI slipped down to 30 per cent. The Socialist Party (PSI) advanced slightly to 13 per cent, but two of the other three parties in the ruling coalition did not do well. As a result, the position of the DC in the government was further strengthened.



Popperfoto

Ciriaco De Mita, imposer

The Christian Democrats, accordingly, felt able to resist the temptation to compromise on the referendum about indexing wages, which had been demanded by the communists in order to overturn last year's government decision to reduce the degree of protection afforded to wage-earners. Prime Minister Craxi announced that he would resign if the PCI won.

As it turned out the PCI lost the referendum, though it got 45 per cent of the vote, well over its normal electoral support (though it must be said that at least four percentage points came from the far right).

PRESS COVERAGE of recent Italian political developments has emphasised Craxi's successes. His government has lasted longer than any other government in the last twenty years, which admittedly may not seem to be a major feat as the average life of an Italian government is 12 months. But Craxi has been Prime Minister for two years despite being leader of a party which has little more than 12 per cent of the electorate behind it.

Craxi's ambition has been to achieve the kind of success obtained by his socialist colleagues in Greece, Spain and France. This has not occurred. He took over the leadership of the PSI in 1976 after it had done badly in the elections where the rest of the Left had done well. The PSI realized that its vote was increasingly concentrated in the South and that it was losing ground among the working class and the intellectuals, the traditional basis of its support.

By 1979, the PSI sought to present itself as the only party which could guarantee the 'governability' of the country: the DC was described as a traditional conservative party in decline and the PCI as an old-fashioned working class-party condemned to be either part of the 'support system' of the DC (through

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the 'historic compromise') or a sectarian opposition (as it is being currently described). Thus the PSI could seek to occupy the 'central' position that the DC could no longer hold and the PCI could never hope to conquer.

In pursuing the 'centre', the PSI could not ignore the fact that the success of other European socialist parties such as the French, Greek and Spanish, has often coincided with their being identified not only with a new image of modernity and dynamism, but also with a radicalism of the left, a diffuse desire for change and the disarray of their communist rivals.

The PSI's problem is that it faces a communist party which is unlikely to repeat the mistakes of its French or Spanish counterparts. Furthermore, the 1983 general elections showed that the small Republican Party was able to mobilise considerable support among those urban middle classes which had been the PSI's main target.

Craxi attempted to compensate for these weaknesses by developing an image of youthful dynamism, by losing weight and by cultivating the media. Electorally, this SDPish strategy has not paid off. The PSI remains in government with the DC in order to obtain a greater share of political and economic resources, seeking to establish its own clientéles and interests against those of the DC. In so doing, it inevitably damages Christian Democracy but becomes, increasingly, just another 'party of patronage'.

The new ascendancy of the DC and the now secure position of De Mita, underlined by the electoral and referendum victories, has been confirmed by the fact that it has been able to regain the post of President of the Republic. De Mita has been able to impose his own candidate, Francesco Cossiga, on his own party *and* on both the PSI and the PCI. It had been widely assumed that the successor to Sandro Pertini would be a Christian Democrat, but it had also been assumed that he (a 'she' would have been unlikely) would emerge, as in the past, only after many ballots. De Mita was able to use the PCI against the PSI by announcing that, though he wanted the new President to be a Christian Democrat he also wanted him to be seen to be the President of all Italians and not merely the expression of the ruling coalition.

Accordingly he sought to obtain Communist support for Cossiga. The PCI, in a sober mood after its electoral defeats, was more than willing to co-operate in the election of a President who, as chairman of the Senate had demonstrated his impartiality and statesmanship. All Christian Democrats rallied round De Mita and his candidate, while Craxi was in no position to veto a DC candidate who already — on paper — had an absolute majority. Thus Francesco Cossiga was elected in the first ballot, the first time this has ever happened.

ALL THIS DEMONSTRATES the uphill task the PCI continues to face. The DC has had forty years during which it has occupied every available niche of political power. In so doing it has ensured for itself the support of the most varied social and economic interests.

This leads to constant infighting and gives the DC the appearance of being a party which is about to fall apart. But the internal struggle is concerned with division of the spoils not with principles or policies. The power of the DC also has international legitimacy: it acts on behalf of the US as the supreme guarantor of Italy's loyalty to the principles of the Atlantic Alliance.

To remove this kind of party from power requires the most formidable concentration of political support. This was the intuition behind the original formula of the 'historic compromise', an attempt to expand the basis of Italian democracy by including the PCI in the government arena with the support of the DC — or at least of most of it.

This strategy has failed and has few supporters within or without the PCI. The alternative strategy was to call for a new coalition whose axis would be the two parties of the Left: the PCI and the PSI. This political line contains three fundamental weaknesses: In the first place, socialists and communists together cannot, at least for now, constitute a majority. While the PCI has no choice but to remain in opposition, the PSI can and does opt for an alliance with the DC.

Secondly, the present leadership of the PSI has committed itself to a radical departure from the traditions of Italian socialism, seeking to become the favoured party of private enterprise and of the American Administration. Thirdly, the central assumption of the 'historic compromise' has yet to be proved wrong. This was that it was inconceivable that the kind of structural reforms the PCI was envisaging had any chance of success against Christian Democrat opponents so entrenched in Italian society. □

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When in Moscow. . .

Stephen Shenfield, Centre for Russian & East European Studies, University of Birmingham

Andy McSmith makes some very curious judgments in his 'Purge time in Moscow' (*NS* 12 July).

'Common sense says that Gromyko has been promoted.' But whatever the prestige of his new post, he has lost control over Soviet foreign policy, the only field in which he has any competence.

Nor should *either* 'Stanlinists' *or* 'Party democrats' be thought to exist near the top of the hierarchy, which takes care to exclude such extremists (by Soviet standards). Gorbachev's discipline campaign doesn't mean he isn't also a reformer (again, by Soviet standards, not ours).

To say, as Andy McSmith does, that the Soviet system has 'banned politics' is to use the word 'politics' in a very narrow, culture-bound way. Purges and other events should be analysed not only in terms of the feuds between Mafia-like 'families' but also in terms of the conflict of policy tendencies — which matters much more for all of us. And by no means all of such conflict is totally hidden from view. It would be good if journalists occasionally took a serious interest in it.

Irish smokescreens

John Hedges, Press Officer, Dublin Sinn Fein

Conor Ryan's analysis of the recent local election results in the 26 countries (NS 28 June), mentions Sinn Fein only once, in passing, while giving fulsome praise to the pro-EEC, pro-multinational, pro-partitionist Workers Party. Seeing that the results confirmed Sinn Fein's position as the fourth largest political party in the 26 Counties (ahead of the Workers Party), perhaps Conor would like to explain this 'oversight'?

I would be foolish to deny that the Workers Party has made gains in Dublin at the expense of the Labour Party, but considering that the Workers Party has been concentrating nearly all its resources in Dublin for the past 15 years, it should come as no surprise.

The 1984 European election was the first in recent times that Sinn Fein had seriously contested in Dublin and the experience gained from that campaign saw our 1979 local election vote rise from 5,000 to 12,500 this year in the limited number of areas we contested. This year in five of the 15 areas contested by both Sinn Fein and the Workers Party we outpolled the Workers Party candidates (their subsequent successes were due to transfer from the other establishment parties).

Perhaps the reason for Conor Ryan's smokescreen lies in his fear that he might have to explain why his allegedly democratic socialist Labour Party supports the state censorship which bars Sinn Fein from RTE radio and television and prevents us from putting our policies before the people or meeting with our critics in open debate. Or is he worried that the 26 County Labour Party's refusal to meet democratically elected Sinn Fein councillors, thereby disenfranchising part of the electorate, wouldn't go down too well with socialists in Britain?

People prefer gardens

Jules Lubbock, London NW3

Messrs Harris & Lipman (Letters 12 July) are wrong in assuming I was unaware of Miss Coleman's loonier ideas; I ignored them because they do not invalidate her suggestive finding of a statistical relationship between certain designs and a litter-ridden and vandalised environment. Houses without gutters let in the damp — it's a similar point.

But I am stunned by their persistance in doubting that the overwhelming majority of English households (maybe not Scottish ones) prefer houses with gardens. Until 1956 when the Tories introduced the high-rise subsidy the policy was to provide this. Why was that policy changed? Because a lobby of professional architects, answerable to nobody but themselves, persuaded the Housing Ministry that this was the answer.

And why has the profession always been so hostile to suburbia? Because it shows that you don't need professional architects to design houses. What is either socialist or democratic in a professional conspiracy to corner the market in house-design?

Swings and roundabouts

David McKie, the Guardian, *London EC1*

Peter Kellner can look after himself, but I don't see why some of the odder statements in Gordon Reece's Feedback column (*NS* 12 July) should be allowed to stand until Peter returns from holiday.

Both in Feedback and in his pamphlet for CAER, Dr Reece weights the argument in his favour by comparing PLH (Proportional Loss Hypothesis) on a three-party basis with swing on a two-party basis. But in fact it is perfectly simple to calculate swing on a three-party basis too. And by doing so, you can see that Kellner is perfectly justified in writing as he did about his hypothetical contest in Kingston-upon-Thames, and Reece is wrong in trying to reprove him.

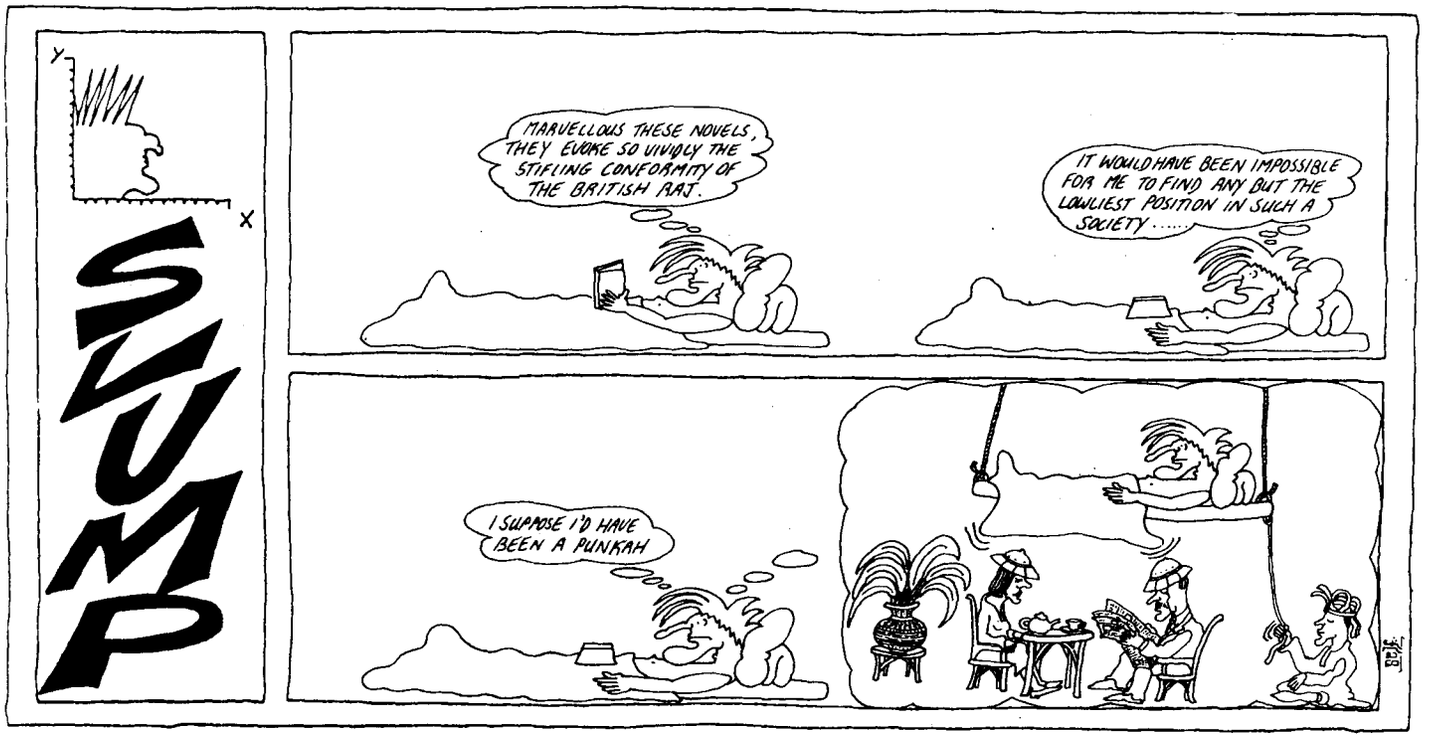
Reece berates Kellner for assuming that a nine per cent swing from Conservative to Alliance in Kingston implies a) that the Conservative vote would fall by only 9 points when it ought (using the June Marplan poll) to have come down by 13; *and* b) that Labour under Kellner's system would be stuck firm on its 1983 figure of 12 per cent.

But this is what might happen at Kingston — again using the June Marplan as the basis, and discounting such possible local circumstances as Norman Lamont's black eye:

	1983 result	hypothetical change
Con	55	42
Labour	12	20
Alliance	33	38

The Conservative vote is down 13 points, thus satisfying the demands of Reece. The swing is 9 per cent as stipulated by Kellner. And the Alliance has failed, as Kellner suggested it would, to take hold of Kingston-upon-Thames.

The allegation that proponents of swing had to


SUMP
MARVELLOUS THESE NOVELS, THEY EVOKE SO VIVIDLY THE STIFLING CONFORMITY OF THE BRITISH RAJ.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO FIND ANY BUT THE LOWLIEST POSITION IN SUCH A SOCIETY.....
I SUPPOSE I'D HAVE BEEN A PUNKAH

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choose one party to ignore in Brecon and Radnor, and might possibly have chosen to ignore the Alliance, is just plain silly. Taking the June Marplan poll again (Conservatives down 13 points since 1983, Labour up 8, Alliance up 5) the result projected at Brecon, on a swing basis, would be Conservative 36 per cent, Labour 34 per cent, Alliance 30 per cent (eliminating minor parties).

Hopelessly wrong. But the result on Reece's basis would have been no better. If I understand his method correctly, the state of the parties, again eliminating minor parties, à la Reece would have been Conservative 34.8, Labour 34.6, Alliance 30.6. Which merely goes to show that applying national figures to individual by-elections without any further calculation is a loopy thing to do.

And finally: though Reece alleges that people using swing were incompetent to predict the 1983 result, while those armed with PLH could hardly miss, that's only because he again assumes that swing must be calculated exclusively on a two-party basis.

A computation of the likely effects of given swings between all three main groupings, published in the *Guardian* shortly before the last election, and without taking advantage of regional evidence, produced figures much the same as Dr Reece's.

	Number of seats per party in 1983		
	Reece	Guardian	Real life
Con	397	395	397
Labour	216	216	209
Alliance	16	17	23

Race for the unions

Mark Sanders, Area Officer, National Union of Public Employees

With reference to 'Unions mock ethnic monitoring' (*NS* 3 May) may I indicate NUPE was never associated with the document and I understand neither was GMBATU. The offending document has since been withdrawn and negotiations will continue on the basis of the CRE code of practice, supported by all unions concerned.

The issues raised are important, however, and indeed our response to the consultative paper from the CRE did draw attention to monitoring and record keeping being policy of NUPE but noted 'genuine fears about ethnic record keeping and the purposes to which they may be used . . .' among the members. These fears may be allayed by negotiation, education and convincing our members of the worth of this tool. It is sad perhaps that Southwark has been highlighted as it is one of the places where the manual workers have fought hard, since 1979, for an equal opportunities policy and concentrated negotiating aims to those areas where black ethnic minorities and women are heavily represented.

Finally, it must be said that differences with race advisers will occur because they are not always right about everything. Please spare us the accusation of racist when this happens.

Cigarette advertising

J. D. J. Havard, Secretary, British Medical Association & David A. Player, Director General, Health Education Council

At a time when the tobacco industry's voluntary agreement with government is due for re-negotiation, it is not surprising that the industry reacted with predictable paranoia when the reality of its regular breaches of this agreement were brought to light in the recent British Medical Association/Health Education Council report 'When smoke gets in your eyes' (Letters 28 June). The veracity of the report — which called for an immediate cessation of all cigarette advertising in youth magazines and an eventual ban on all cigarette promotion — has not been criticised by any one of the 53 magazines which received a copy of it. And IPC, in particular, has now decided to end cigarette advertising in its teenage magazine *Honey* as a result of the report's findings.

It is stated government policy that young people should be protected from inducements to smoke, and this is evidenced in legislation which banned cigarette advertising on TV and radio in 1964. This principle is re-iterated in both the spirit and the letter of the voluntary agreement between the tobacco industry and government concerning cigarette advertising in print media. Breaches in this arena are supposedly monitoried by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) through it's Code of Practice on Cigarette Advertising.

In practice, advertisements in publications directed at young people constantly slip through because neither the ASA Code nor the voluntary agreement itself explicitly defines youth. Not only has the ASA admitted this to be the case, but its own Code confuses the issue further by referring to the ages of *both* 18 and 25 in two consecutive guidelines on the interpretation of youth. The authors of the BMA/HEC report set the upper limit of youth as 25, not arbitrarily, but because non-smokers are recruited to smoking up to this age. Even if the limit were set at 18, the report shows that more than one million 15-19 year old girls are still deliberately targeted by cigarette advertising in women's magazines.

While the tobacco industry claims that it 'takes very great care' to avoid placing advertising in magazines 'where young girls form a significant part of the readership' this is not true in practice. The BMA/HEC report showed that not only have youth magazines like *Honey* and *Look Now* come under pressure to take cigarette advertising, but *Over 21*, *Company*, *Ms London*, and *Girl about Town* all carry cigarette advertising and have a majority of readers who are teenagers and young women.

FEEDBACK

Bringing democracy to Iran

THANK YOU for your generous coverage of the struggle against Khomeini in Iran ('Anti-war surge shakes Ayatollah', *NS* 21 June. However, I was amazed that your reporter implied that Mujahedin led the fight against his tyranny and that Dr Bakhtiar, the leader of NAMIR, was somehow unreasonable in refusing to work with them.

NAMIR, the National Movement of Iranian Resistance, has on the contrary made it clear that it will work with any individual or group which stands for the liberation of the people of Iran from Khomeini. We have made only one condition, that the individual or group should have an absolute and unqualified commitment to establishing democratic government in Iran, independent of any foreign power.

Unfortunately the leaders of Mujahedin do not share this objective, although I do not doubt that some of their individual supporters do. First, Mujahedin is a para-military organisation organised on classical Leninist lines. It is opposed to democracy and human rights and committed to establishing a totalitarian party government. Like Khomeini they want to decide who can take part in the political process on their terms. They are opposed to pluralism and democratic choice. They explicitly reject the basic Iranian democratic constitution of 1906 modelled on Western European democracy and prefer the Eastern European communist model imposed by the Soviet Union, whose client they wish Iran to become.

Second, they seek to effect a synthesis of Islamic fundamentalism with communism; indeed, for a period they were closely associated with Khomeini and share some of the same terrorist roots. Contrary to your reporter's view of the popularity of the group in Iran, this attempt to combine two tyrannies into one super-tyranny has antagonised ordinary people in Iran, as has their subservient relationship to the rulers of Iraq with whom we are at war. Do not take my word for it. Examine what happened when Mujahedin called for a month of action against the war earlier this year. Precisely nothing — because their call fell on deaf ears, coming from a discredited group, alienated from the Iranian mainstream and in alliance with both Iraq and the Soviet Union.

By contrast when Dr Bakhtiar called for demonstrations on 17 May, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took to the streets, as your correspondent admits, armed only with carnations against the guns of Khomeini's thugs. The fact is that the top brass of Mujahedin is increasingly isolated, leading an elite life in Europe preoccupied with doctrinal issues and a cult of personality.

We in NAMIR have a different priority. It is to build the broadest possible coalition inside Iran for the end of theocratic tyranny and the restoration of constitutional government, with democratic institutions, an independent judiciary and the protection of human rights. We include conservatives, liberals and socialists in our ranks. The only monarchists who work with us are those who accept the limits of constitutional monarchy, of the sort you have in Britain. Some of us are in fact republicans and all of us regard the person of the formal Head of State as secondary to the establishment of democracy.

Dr Bakhtiar himself comes from a background of democratic socialism. As a young student in France, he campaigned against Franco; as a young man in the war he joined the French army to fight against Hitler and fascism; and for years in Iran he fought first against British petro-colonialism and then against the tyranny of the Shah. He has been imprisoned several times for his democratic beliefs. Not surprisingly, he was the first major political figure in Iran, as Prime Minister of the short-lived democratic government of 1979, to predict the tyrannical consequences of Khomeini's fanaticism.

Dr Bakhtiar and NAMIR are determined that Iran should break out of the grim cycle of replacing one tyranny with another, as happened when Khomeini replaced the Shah. Anyone who wants democracy and free choice for the people of Iran is our friend and ally. I appeal to our friends in Britain for understanding and to all Iranian readers of the *New Statesman* to help us by contacting us at the following address: NAMIR, PO Box 313, London W2 4QX.

Dr Abby Ghobadian

Dr Abby Ghobadian is an Iranian academic living in exile in the UK. He is a NAMIR committee member.

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DOESN'T ANYONE KNOW ANY GAYS?
wasn't old Gerald on the tea-trolley a bit that way?
do we have Quentin Crisp's phone number?
dum di dum....
AIDS
Tony '85

Tony Reeves

'J'ACCUSE'

This year 'Sex and Health' was the theme of the annual scientific conference of the Faculty of Community Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians. ANDREW LUMSDEN was invited as a journalist to speak on the British media response to the arrival of AIDS. He was introduced by a member of the Faculty who said some pleasant words about the '. . .valuable contribution made by the media to the spread of accurate information... '*

'Those were generous words. I shall be taking a less kindly view of my own profession of journalism.

I am going to take for granted if I may that no one in this hall, involved as you are in community health care responses to the appearance of AIDS in the UK, is ignorant of the newspaper hysteria in February of this year. If I'm to reach any specific observations about the media's recent handling of the uncertainty and suffering entailed by AIDS, I believe we need to move first into the whole conduct of this country's media towards homosexuals — both the homosexuals in its employment, and those in the world beyond. AIDS threatens others besides the present prime UK risk group of male homosexuals, but it will be agreed I think that the critical factor shaping the national media's coverage when AIDS burst onto every headline and seemingly onto every programme earlier this year was the disproportionate vulnerability of gay men.

Friends who see the American and European press assure me that though misinformation and highly prejudicial comment denouncing gay men have cropped up in both regions' mainstream media, there has been nothing quite comparable to the rabble-rousing in this country, from the 'quality' press (eg *The Times* and the *Sunday Telegraph*) to the *Mirror*, the *Sun*, the *Star*. By 14 June this year, in the *Sun*, a man was writing to the advice columnist of a mass-circulation paper begging for reassurance that he was unlikely to have contracted AIDS from a brief adultery with a friend's wife, about which he was feeling deeply guilty. Plainly heterosexual, he had imbibed from the journalism of this country an impression that AIDS is a retribution for sexual 'betrayal' or 'guilt', and clearly no percentages about risk-groups had sunk in.

With the emptying of the pulpits and the churches, print and broadcasting — which are peculiarly national in this country, purveying the same messages from the Scillies to the Orkneys — have taken to themselves functions of social and moral control which are wholly antithetical to honest disseminations of information. But that I think is obvious if you see it, untrue if you don't. I would like to adress a simpler, quieter matter: competence, journalistic competence.

The customary behaviour of the most distinguished as of the crudest British media towards the topic of homosexuality has been so unprofessional — if the term *professional* is to be allowed any positive value whatever — that their conduct this year over AIDS was inevitable. There is an entrenched attitude to be broken — or we will see more hysterics like those of February. I am sure we will see more. Indeed if the failure of craft over the topic of homosexuality is as pronounced as I believe it to be, it may well carry lessons right across the board about the degree to which men and women who perhaps began journalism in the UK with some hopes of what a reporter or a commentator's task may be have lost pride, have given up.

If I'm to talk of competence, I must at the least try to persuade you that I know a little of what I'm talking about. The qualifications of other speakers, their medical expertise, is apparent from their styles and titles, even if you know nothing else of them. There are no initials to do as much for a journalist. I wish to make plain to you therefore that I see myself as belonging, alongside a handful of other journalists, to a culture-shift which is resisted might and main by my own profession — the emergence of women and men who see nothing ordained and much that is artificial about 'heterosexuality'. I think it right to be known as gay in my professional as well as in my personal life. Mainly I've worked for the national media. Six publications between 1963 and today: the *Daily Telegraph, Management Today* magazine, *The Times, Petroleum Economist*, the former *Gay News*, and

*Abridged from original talk delivered 21 June.

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y the *New Statesman*.

Fifteen years have now gone by — a whole generation — since you first heard the word 'gay' used of and by homosexuals in an articulate rejection of the sexual roles in force until then. I believe one of your speakers yesterday, the historian Jeffrey Weeks, may have touched on the fluidity of individually assumed, and socially commended, erotic identity over the centuries. Fifteen years ago this perpetual continental drift in human sexuality, if I may put it like that to a science-based profession, led to the breakaway of a new small continent, the 'out', the willingly self-declared, lesbian or gay man. Such are the 'plate tectonics' of sexuality — I offer the term *mate tectonics* — that mountains of abuse and seas of incomprehension have followed; just as occurs with each step taken by women towards equivalence with men as models of the human. The 'breakaway' has of course been to an assertion that lesbians and gay men are no less primary types of humanity today than are women or men whose deepest sexual affections are for persons of the other sex.

There is no intellectual or observational difficulty about the proposition that lesbians and gay men are primary types, equals among equals, and not secondary modifications of or damaged variants on one sole primary 'the heterosexual'. Yet nowhere has resistence to this — shall I call it hypothesis? — been more formidable, (unless in armed forces, totalitarian states, and recidivist faiths) than in the supposedly news-pursuing occupation of journalism.

Let me describe to you something that appeared in the *Mirror* on 13 June. I choose it because it does not *overtly* trash homosexuals. The *Mirror* does not, as we all know, consider itself Conservative with a large C. It ran a picture of a young male model and a young female model both wearing dresses. Not quite dresses, but more or less. The accompanying copy was wholly abusive. The woman's outfit was 'OK', but of the man's the *Mirror* demanded: 'Was it handed to the wrong model? Apparently not. It's the latest for men, *mate*'. The designs were prize-winners at a fashion college. The *Mirror* capitulated at once to what I suppose we must call a morality of menswear, directing our hatred at 'effeminacy'.

'None so deaf. . .'

LAST WEDNESDAY, 10 July, the equality council of the National Union of Journalists held a press conference to launch two new publications, *Guidelines on Reporting Homosexuality* and *AIDS*. Other than the *Daily Express*, no mainstream media turned up. No *Guardian* even. None so deaf as those who will not. . .

I am old enough to remember the last years of the first Lord Beaverbrook's ownership of the *Daily Express*, and the contempt in which he was held by all — other than Michael Foot and A J P Taylor — who hoped that journalism and self-respect might not always be opposites. I don't forget that Geoffrey Dawson, as editor, compelled *The Times* to lie in the 1930s or that the Hearst press in America was a force for no perceptible good whatever three-quarters of a century before Rupert Murdoch, in the US as here, also became a force for no perceptible good. That there is nothing new under the sun, strictly speaking, about the *Sun*, I know to be true. Yet I feel that the word journalist and the term journalism have deservedly sunk today in the UK to the lowest point in public esteem that I've known in my professional life. A teenage audience before whom I tried in May to answer questions about the arrival of Gay Liberation Front in London at the start of the 1970s — when they were most of them in nursery school, and some were not yet born — groaned aloud when it was discovered that I am, as I am, a journalist. I could only laugh, and give in to their derision.

But if I can ask a somewhat older audience for a temporary suspension of incredulity about what is possible in journalism, I'm going to pretend that a journalist may be a person of service to a democracy, and that journalism may be an occupation for pioneering if not for profoundly creative minds. By that standard, I am going to have a go at the structural — institutionalised — reasons why the British media were incompetent to deal with the emergence of AIDS, first during the long run-up when it was evident (1981-84) that cases would multiply on this side of the Atlantic, and then when it was acknowledged to be here. I am *not* going to pay tribute to the occasional good programmes or articles which were exceptions to the rule, for it is the rule I think that concerns us today, and the exceptions were few.

Much amazement and laughter was caused a few weeks ago when it was learnt that *Dynasty*, the American soap, had hired an out gay man as consultant for the planned on-screen affair between Steven and Luke. The notion, as I understand it, was to get such an affair more or less right. So far as I'm aware no editor or commissioning editor in Fleet St, whether quality or popular press, and no senior programme planners in broadcasting, have ever hired a gay consultant to improve homosexual coverage, although their responsibilities are greater than those of the makers of *Dynasty*. There would have been plentiful precedent for the temporary — or if need be permanent — use of consultants on an evidently novel or difficult topic by editors and commissioning editors.

Consultants are used for typographical and design changes. Trusted outside experts are used by 'quality' national newspapers to draft editorials beyond the range of the salaried staff, though the fact is not emphasised to the public. Consultants who might alert a distinguished newspaper or regular current affairs programme to realities known to gay men or lesbians — who indeed would have to begin by explaining the past 15 years — have apparently been unthinkable, yet no different in concept to the 'stringer' who watches a foreign country on behalf of a newspaper or news-programme. Neither the retaining of a stringer, nor the use of a consultant in such an area as lesbian/gay life and politics, would involve loss of the editorial integrity in which readers or viewers wish to place their trust.

The question will cross your mind, though, why would the 'flagship' media have to go outside their own staffs for the expertise in modern homosexual reality which was wholly lacking before AIDS arrived, and which is lacking still? There are gay men working at all levels of the British media. Lesbians also, though probably numerically fewer and in conformity to the general obstacles to women's promotion occupying fewer influential positions.

I could speak of gay men, no doubt lesbians also, weakening before the temptations of status and money and leaving their true natures on the doorstep every time they enter one or another of the famous portals of broadcasting or print. But except in the rarest instances of outright hypocrisy — of deceptions deliberately practised on readers or colleagues in order to *attack* gays — this would be to single out people who are systematically induced to be dishonest, and who experience pressures unguessed-at by heterosexuals.

A systematic inducement to be dishonest. Here, as nearly as I can phrase it, is the compulsion which the policy-formulators of our national media exert over the interviewers, presenters, staff writers or free-lancers who are lesbian or gay; and to whom the policy-makers stand in the relation of editors and/or employers. I have said that we are 15 years into the global departure from the previous social role allotted to, and previously consented to by, the *not*-heterosexual. Yet I know of no staff journalist or valued contributor who appears or writes regularly in the major media, where the occasion warrants it, as that distinctive sensual and intellectual being, a 'homosexual'.

Occasion warrants far more often than

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Muck-spreader's headline from the *Sun*, 1 February 1985, (L), and Old Codger moralising from the *Mirror*, 13 June 1985, (R)

even the most well-disposed of decisively heterosexual people might suppose. I can cite, besides the AIDS crisis when it was on its way and now that it has arrived, the cyclical so-called homosexual scandals of public life. But really, it is in the trivia that the suppression of truthfulness is most obvious — those streams of minor references to their heterosexuality by journalists which are balanced by ... silence on the part of lesbian or gay colleagues.

If we pretend that journalism has not become irretrievably valueless, but might by fits and starts recall a role in sustaining exchanges of viewpoint within a democracy, it must be plain that the absence of variety in the sexual orientation of the licensed voices in our national media isn't a mere complaint about discriminatory employment practices. I am seeking to talk of falsification: falsification of comment and correspondingly — where comment is stifled — of news. An industry which lies to the public about the quotient of non-heterosexuals in its ranks, which refuses to cultivate their knowledge and their individual tone of voice or, through them, to obtain access to an exceedingly 'newsworthy' segment of the population, was of course, and is, unfitted to deal with such a matter as AIDS. It is habituated and it habituates the general public — or rather it *ossifies* the general public — into regarding gays as absolute 'outsiders'.

I would like to draw your attention to a fact that probably escaped anyone not actually working like myself in news journalism. When the MP for Islington South & Finsbury, Chris Smith, deliberately and on an appropriate occasion described himself as the gay man that he is, in front of reporters and a television crew in Rugby on 10 November last year, the fact rapidly became known throughout what used to be called the establishment. Yet no front-rank national medium retailed the information as the event deserved. We are as it happens, in the centenary year (1885-1985) of the modern era of legislative intervention in the lives of homosexuals, and yet Chris Smith, in his 30s, is the first fully 'out' gay male member of Parliament. One more fully out member than the entire quality media establishment can boast.

The media could not deal with the emergence of just one MP in a truthful light, or supply either the present or the historical context, because my colleagues at the top of my profession have deprived themselves of any natural means of enquiry. I would go further: they were embarrassed that anyone who by election has become party to the constitutional process and therefore 'one of us' should have broken with the affectation that there is a great public out there who must be protected from first-hand acquaintance with the lesbians and gays hidden from sight in public life. My evidence for that embarrassment is in a *Times* editorial of 21 November last year. It blamed AIDS on gay liberation. It rebuked without naming anyone persons in public life who let on that they're gay.

Absolute outsiders. . . surely I needn't waste much of my breath on expounding the damage done earlier this year to medical, political, trade union and employer responses to AIDS by the presumption in the qualitatively 'highest' reaches of journalism, as well as in the most demagogic, that beyond the fringes of society lie demons making faces: queers and lezzies. At the demagogic end, the *Sun* pretended this 16 May that the prospect of an out gay local councillor, Bob Crossman of Islington, becoming borough mayor in 1986 is not simply interesting, which it is, but a suitable topic for a front-page mockery distributed throughout the nation. The 'insider' — a local councillor of long service — was re-cast as an *outsider* against whose intrusion all Britain must frivolously be warned.

The highest reaches of journalism, as I have called them in deference to their own hopes about themselves, are not sufficiently better than the popular media whom they suppose they deplore; not sufficiently better to redress public standards of information. I mentioned the *Times* and its failure to comprehend, no matter what the passing political complexion of its editor or proprietor, that a nationally-valued journal of social record should have given information about what it terms gay liberation during the last 15 years, before it denounced it; or if it wished, *while* editorially denouncing it.

Let me close with television. You probably made an effort to watch London Weekend's *Weekend World* broadcast this 24 February called The AIDS Scare — Fact and Fiction. The presenter, Brian Walden, invented — to the best of my knowledge it was an invention — the term 'leakage' to refer to the 'danger that [AIDS] may leak out into the rest of the population'. Perhaps my ear, and that of other gays who watched, is unduly sensitive. We thought we heard in that term 'leakage' a drawing back of Walden's skirts, a distaste at the possibility of 'decent' people falling victim to this awful affliction. *Weekend World* sibling under the skin to the *Sun*. Gays as lesser persons, of some second order of reality.

You and your colleagues spent February and March this year undoing the ravages of my profession's incompetence before the phenomenon of lesbian and gay re-self-identification. I am ashamed at the spectacle made by those who count themselves lucky to lead my profession.

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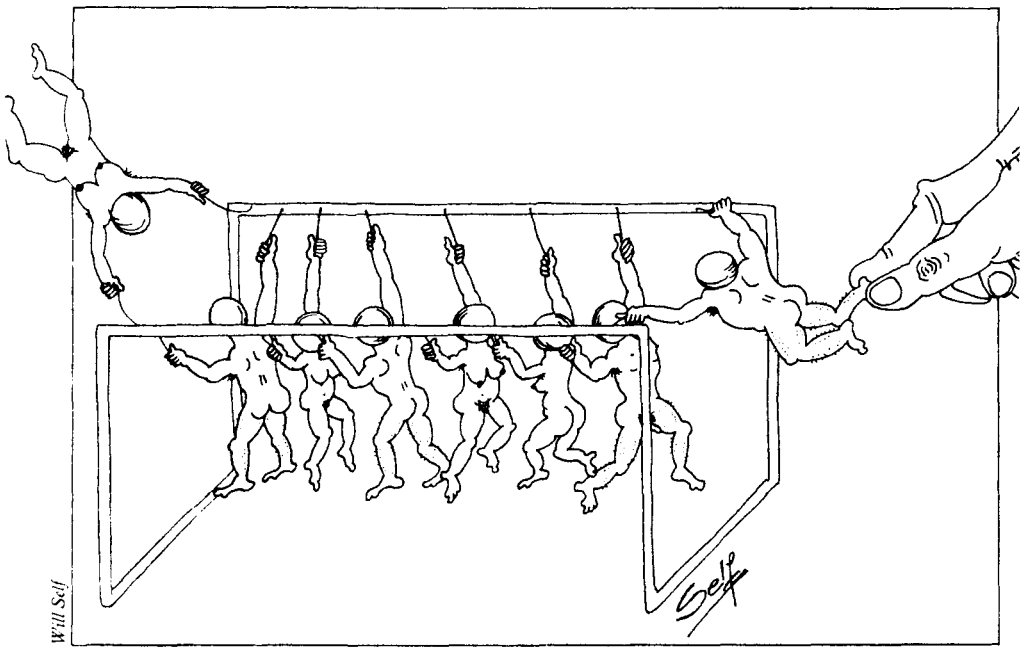
Steps in the dance of desire

Christopher Meade

Sexuality and Its Discontents
JEFFREY WEEKS *Routledge* £6.95



Will Self

AS AN ADOLESCENT I leafed furtively through umpteen tomes in search of guidance on my sexual practices. 'Don't worry,' they said. 'Masturbation is fine — in moderation.' Beneath the reassuring tone they all seemed to hint at the unspeakable consequences of excess. Such mixed messages abound in the burgeoning texts of sexology which Jeffrey Weeks explores with a critical but creative eye.

It's much easier to tease out one ideological strand than attempt to handle the whole spaghetti-like mass of opinions surrounding sexuality, but Weeks argues that a gradual invasion of sexual politics by the New Right has created the need for a radical overview. The gay male, on the receiving end of oppression but understanding of masculinity with and without its usual trappings of privilege, has a unique vantage point from which to look for patterns in the tangle.

There are limits to anyone's vision of course. Issues surrounding fertility and child care are hardly touched on here and, in concentrating on preference over gender, he avoids tackling the full extent of feminism's critique of male defined society.

But this sensitive study still succeeds in locating many widely felt uncertainties, sharpening them up into pointed and timely questions for the future.

When Thatcher lashed out at 'the fashionable theories and permissive claptrap' of the Sixties, she made bedfellows again of an assortment of feminists, gays, liberals, fetishists, lefties and swingers who have had little in common since they hung up their kaftans. Weeks goes back to that much-maligned decade to unravel threads of puritanism and libertarianism now thoroughly interwoven in present sexual groupings.

Anti-sexists may renounce that 'sexual revolution' as just more sexploitation of women by men, but Weeks points out that a gradual liberalisation of public opinion on abortion, single-parents, homosexuality and other hot potatoes has continued ever since, despite the Right's claim to represent an overwhelming moral backlash. Many are only now receiving the permission supposedly granted way back then. For Weeks, the Broad Left's chronic failure to speak up for sexual freedoms reveals an unnecessary loss of nerve.

Delving through reams of categorisations of perversions and deviations drawn up by male sexperts from Krafft-Ebing to Kinsey and beyond, he shows how they all undermined their more or less progressive insights with unconscious assumptions. What's said is often less important than how it's heard though; much of their moralistic cant sounded like a voice of liberation in the context of more prudish times.

But definitions of what is or isn't supposed to be 'natural', whether biologically or philosophically arrived at, are all ultimately restrictive, Weeks argues. It was Freud who plunged his besuited arm into the messy yearnings of childhood to pull out evidence that the acceptably normal is but one fact drawn from polymorphous perversity. For this, despite the phallocentric claptrap of many of Freud's other pronouncements, Weeks offers him praise.

> 'Desire' dances on the precipice between determinism and disruption. After Freud, it cannot be reduced to primeval biological urges, beyond human control, nor can it be seen as a product of conscious willing and planning. It is somewhere ambiguously, elusively, in between, omnipotent but intangible, powerful but goal-less.

The study of the unconscious has informed the dense semiological texts of recent years, ending the pigeon-holing of our turn-ons to focus instead on desire and the cultural signs which weld it so powerfully to specific objects, human or otherwise. Meanwhile, a host of angry tracts has appeared, defending or deriding the aims of a profusion of sexual identities now on offer, from celibate to paedophile.

Weeks advocates a 'radical pluralist' approach in uniting our analyses of these tribes in the face of the new missionaries of the Right, and he challenges afresh the moralism he sees in some feminist and socialist thinking. For instance, he quotes female critics of the Women's Movement's singling out of pornography for attack; he too considers this to be dangerously proscriptive, over-simplistic in its view of male and female responses to representations. He looks with interest at the statements of gay and lesbian sado-masochists whose refusal to deny their dubious desires or to be defined as supporters of the authoritarian values which their activities parody has implications for those who indulge in less painful pleasures.

He also seems unhappy with the enshrinement of anger as prime source of motivation for political action; encouraging rage against male behaviour from wolf-whistles to violent rape may expose its common sexism, but blurs vital differences and vitiates against the recognition of subtle variation of intent on which his pluralism relies.

But deep-seated angers, like the attitudes which provoke them, can't be wished away too easily. Weeks's academic tone does make the sex war sound a bit like a chess game at times. However, in the sexual sphere shame and confusion may be more common symptoms of oppression than clear-cut rage. I think he's right to emphasise that slogans used as 'mobilising ideas' are bound to have negative consequences too. If women believe it preferable to stamp out porn than to worry about being seen as 'anti-sex' that's their choice, but the cost of it is real.

His main concern is with the male gay community, currently stricken by the AIDS crisis. This has resurrected popular myths of homosexuality as disease and stopped a lifestyle of celebratory promiscuity in its tracks. But Weeks sees the potential, through coming to terms with the terror, for a new insistence on emotional and physical well-being in gay relationships and a turning away from over-reaction to heterosexist norms.

Among heterosexuals too, many once-vocal advocates of communality and non-monogamy seem bruised from hurtful experiments with open-plan loving. They've slid back uneasily into coupledom, hyper-conscious of its sexist traps yet wary of alternatives. But this failure of nerve and imagination is surely only temporary. From a male viewpoint this book offers a challenging but optimistic glimpse of potential routes through sexual inequality to the sensual unknown beyond. As Jeffrey Weeks rather ambiguously concludes, the future of sexuality is, 'as ever, in our hands'. □

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Writing for victory

Nina Hibbin

Among You Taking Notes . . . The Wartime Diaries of Naomi Mitchison 1939-1945
ed. DOROTHY SHERIDAN *Gollancz* £12.95

THERE ARE PRIVATE diarists who pour their hearts and souls into their daily entries. There are public diarists who write with posterity in mind. And there are Mass-Observation diarists, who volunteered to chronicle their day-to-day lives during World War II for the benefit of sociologists, with no thought, at the time, of publication.

The fascination of *Among You Taking Notes . . .* is that it is a bit of each. By 1939 Naomi Mitchison was already a well-known novelist, with close friends (like Margaret and G.D.H. Cole) and relatives (her brother was J.B.S. Haldane) in the upper echelons of the Left. She was therefore well placed to give a running commentary on the informed mood of the moment and on the planning for a brave new post-war world that was gripping the left-wing movement.

At the same time, she was recording life among the Kintyre fishing and farming communities, as well as the bustling activities in the laird's house and estate to which she and her husband Dick had moved. War, from this privileged and remote vantage-point, was about evacuees, billetings and the arrivals and partings of family, friends and servants; about eking out the ration with freshly-shot game.

To have written a substantial entry for almost every day of the war indicates a commitment beyond the call of Mass-Observation. An anguished account of a shattering personal tragedy suggests that the diary was also fulfilling a deeper need.

Gradually, as the 'dear diary' aspect takes over, something very remarkable happens. You feel you are being drawn into a novel rather than a serious of unpremeditated jottings — an epic saga in which the strong-minded, mother-earth heroine struggles to chart her own principled course through conflicting social pressures.

Patrician by birth, socialist and feminist by conviction, she is desperately anxious to cross the class barriers which set her apart from the locals. Her description of a first footing expedition seems over-detailed until you understand her delight that, anonymous behind her traditional mask, she is for once being accepted in the villagers' houses on their own terms. Yet she cannot restrain her impatience with some of their plebeian patterns of behaviour.

Mother of many, substitute mother for many more, writer, poet, lecturer, politician, historian and energetic household provider, she finds a role in the community when she writes, produces and involves the villagers in a local history play. But she must also prove herself as a farmer. Her rich descriptions of sowing and reaping are evocative of a land-worker at one with the soil. But little doubts gradually filter through. In July 1942 she suppresses her fear of driving a tractor down a perilous bank as if the honour of all womanhood depended on it. A year later she is devastated to learn that down in the village they're saying she's a splendid writer but a rotten farmer and is harming the land.

Some of the credit for the narrative cohesion within the discursive style must go to Dorothy Sheridan who, with skills like those of a film editor, has reduced the diaries to one tenth of their original length.

By the end of the war our amazing, endearing — and occasionally infuriating — heroine-diarist is a little less starry-eyed about local life and about her hard-fought-for scheme for an independent, democratic Scotland, but as passionate as ever for socialism and sexual equality. □

Eagles from hen-houses

Nicci Gerrard

Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920
MARTHA VICINUS *Virago* £15 & £6.95

REDUNDANCY is given a new and hopeful meaning in Martha Vicinus's study. Her 'independent women' are those unmarried women who, 'shut up like eagles in a hen-house', are condemned to finding 'some harmless activity'. Their pent-up energies exploded into the 19th century, altering its structure. In their exodus from the confinement and respectable lovelessness of domestic private prisons, they made schools, colleges, hospitals, gaols, settlements and the political platform their homes. These middle-class women, pioneers of social change and female space, are our 'foremothers': if their demands are now obsolete and their faith in a brave new world utopian, they remain models of patient courage.

Though admiring, Vicinus avoids simple celebration. Handling her subject with the meticulous, deft intelligence of a scholar immersed yet not drowned in a complex period of social history, she remains alert to the ironies and insidious dangers of the Victorian woman's struggle. All but a few of the 'redundant' women clung to the myth of gentility, self-sacrifice and service. Some of their most threatening challenges to male monopoly peculiarly perpetuated oppressive images of femininity. Nurses were urged to be paragons of cool cleanliness, wiping away moral impurity along with oozing infection. Those working with repentant prostitutes concentrated obsessively on the victim (never to be 'forgiven') rather than the seducer, while the exhilaration of female education was weighted by severe emphasis on its religious and disciplinary qualities. The public, freshly stirred by Florence Nightingale, adored such expressions of womanly abasement to a higher cause: in an age of materialism and self-seeking, the pioneers continued to carry the burden of morality for others until their demand for suffrage set fire to pedestals.

In the metaphors of fire, blazing through Vicinus's book in her well-selected quotations, this curious juxtaposition of new freedom and continuing sacrifice is highlighted. If Christabel Pankhurst 'lit the flame that consumed the past' she is also 'both flame and burnt offering'. Educationalist Constance Maynard's 'marriage' to her female colleague is erotically self-depicted in terms of heat and fire, but her work is also a spiritual torch lighting the path of self-discipline and effacement. The rhetoric of sacrifice and liberation fuse in the forging of a new female vision.

Vicinus, ever sensitive to the complexities and contradictions of her subject, does not try to force her material into an artificial pattern. She permits difficulty to disrupt her study, displaying a passionate respect for past and present that is perhaps best summed up by her quotation from Winifred Holtby, writing in 1934: 'It seems possible that in a wiser world we should walk more delicately.' □

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Gollancz

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Plain tales

Francis Wheen

Confessions of an Optimist
WOODROW WYATT *Collins* £12.95

NOBODY LIKES a traitor. And, as far as most people on the Left are concerned, that is what Woodrow Wyatt is. If he had entered Parliament as a Tory MP in the first place, socialists would probably be more kindly disposed to him. As it is, the man who is now one of Margaret Thatcher's staunchest supporters was a Labour MP for more than 20 years. The mystery is why he *ever* thought he was a socialist.

His memoirs don't provide much of an answer. All he says is that during the war his thoughts 'veered to socialism' because the army seemed to function pretty well without the stimulus of personal gain. Since he was an ambitious sort of bloke, once his thoughts had 'veered to socialism' they veered to getting a Labour seat.

His allegiance didn't last long. As he admits, in the election of February 1950 he 'made no mention of socialism' in his election address. In the late 1950s he was a disciple of Gaitskell, and in the 1960s he ran a two-man campaign with Desmond Donnelly to prevent Labour from carrying out its promise to nationalise steel. He was also an early convert to the idea of a Lib-Lab pact. During his two decades in the House, he held office only once — six months as Under-Secretary of State for War in 1951.

He tried to make up for his lack of success in Parliament by influencing public opinion through his columns in the popular press — mostly in the *Mirror* papers, but more recently in the *News of the World*. 'Readership surveys,' he reveals, with customary immodesty, 'showed that more read all the way through my *Mirror* articles than those of the famous Cassandra.' He then adds: 'Because my articles are plain and unembellished I get no journalistic award.' Ain't it a crying shame?

But politics aren't Wyatt's main preoccupation. 'As usual sex was in my thoughts. In Lahore there was a glorious Muslim girl of 17...She was like a soft, ripe peach pressing to fall from the branch.' Perhaps Wyatt hopes to compensate for his lack of journalistic awards by winning the Betty Trask prize. While in India he had an affair with 'a slim, fair-haired, sexy American correspondent, with a Marilyn Monroe figure'. Still in India, he took up with a married woman who 'was like the fairy on top of a Christmas tree'. Back in London, his passions were aroused by an American woman with 'long, slim, but not thin, legs, perfectly shaped, firm round breasts'. Not to mention the half-Hawaiian nurse, 'redolent with sensual Pacific beauty', for whose abortion he had to pay £50. And then there are his four wives.

One wonders if Wyatt has ever met a woman who wasn't a vision of perfect beauty. He seems incapable of referring to a member of the female sex without tagging on some toe-curling compliment. There's Susan Crosland, 'reminiscent in looks of the young Julie Christie'; Sonia Melchett, 'perennially youthful and elegant'; and even, God help us, Margaret Thatcher — 'pleasantly appealing with pretty legs and complexion'.

But I must stop lest you be misled into thinking that this book is a lively read. It isn't. Most of its 356 pages are soporifically tedious. There are a few good anecdotes, but he's told them a thousand times before. □

Driven by words

Liz Heron

I Dreamt the Snow Was Burning
ANTONIO SKÁRMETA *Readers International* £8.95 & £4.95
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SERGEY YURYENEN *Quartet* £8.95
Foreign Wars
KEITH COLQUHOUN *John Murray* £8.95
The Silver Age
JAMES LASDUN *Cape* £8.95
The Tenement
IAIN CRICHTON SMITH *Gollancz* £7.95

CELEBRATING THE VIGOUR and beauty of his native language, and recalling how the heterogeneous voices of Chile's political struggle first entered his poetry, Pablo Neruda ends a section of his *Memoirs* by summing up the positive legacy of the Conquistadores: 'They left us the words.' Half-way through **I Dreamt the Snow Was Burning** Neruda's poetry intervenes, but his belief in the vital and enduring powers of language animates it from the start.

The time is 1973, in the period preceding Pinochet's coup, and the book shares its momentum — though the increasingly ominous events that led to the tragic and brutal end of the Popular Unity Government are neither backdrop nor documentary foreground.

Young football wonder Arturo leaves the South, bent on making the big time, and sexual conquests, in Santiago — self-centred ambitions that clash painfully with the combative energy and commitment of the young revolutionaries he meets in his working-class boarding house. Full of feverish urgency, the words of these *companeros* tear through the narrative, a driving force for the more diffuse inner longings given expression in other characters around them, a defiant shield against the threats of the right. Skármeta condenses the fraught intensity of the struggle in the factories and on the streets.

His writing combines immediacy with sophisticated shifts of style, hints of allegory, and symbolism that is often difficult, sometimes obscure. Most mysterious is the figure of the dwarf, with his companion the Beast, refugees from an absurd landscape of the unconscious, whose presence creates a disturbing subterranean tension across the book and the sense of a world only accessible in dreams.

Language, like dreams, embraces memory and, like dreams, is a key to future renewal. While the companeros' vocabulary of solidarity and collective hopes remains beyond Arturo's reach, new meanings flower in his critical discovery of friendship, passion and the poems of Neruda. Lyrical, stimulating, rich in fantasy, this book stings the heart and simultaneously demands an understanding of the difficulties in joining politics to hearts' desires.

Skármeta published this, his first novel, ten years ago, after leaving Chile. **The Marksman** is also written out of exile, though, in common with other recent examples of Russian emigré fiction, it flaunts a fascination with Western-style decadence and the excesses of the Male Writer as in Hemingway, Miller, Kerouac and Ian Fleming — all in attendance through allusion or pastiche. Yuryenen, however, tries to have it both ways, claiming a debt to Dostoevsky as he mixes seriousness with self-indulgence and splitting his autobiographical hero in two.

The narrator's primacy of vision goes to Kirill, a cynical secret service operative weary of both worlds, East and West; he is to observe Ivan, a writer on the verge of emigration. The self-destructive man in search of his soul is twinned with the artist still in possession of his innocence and, together, they embark on a spree of manic drinking bouts and brawls, miscellaneous sexual encounters and fleeting engagements with the intelligentsia. That this overblown odyssey also aspires to the level of profound historical investigation is indicative of the writer's misplaced vanity.

By contrast, **Foreign Wars** is a decidedly low-key parable of Cold War quietism and passivity. James Palmer is one of the silent majority, a Norwich printer with his own business, comfortably approaching retirement. A chance holiday meeting draws him into the circle of an old acquaintance who is now a US general and into collusion in a nuclear scenario whose components are chillingly compatible with certain familiar extremes of military logic. This is an anti-detective novel, in which the accumulation of clues is brushed aside in the hero's pursuit of a quiet life, his perceptions and emotions adjusted for the sake of everyday convenience, freshly laundered shirts and available sex. Colquhoun's unhurried delineation of his character's very ordinariness lends an appalling authority to the book's atmosphere of foreboding.

'Greed, aggression and lust — that's what motivates people,' says a character in **The Silver Age**. Time after time that same merciless message seems to pierce the lustrous surface of these cleverly written stories, where sensuous detail is magnified to seductively magical proportions. Cruel reversals of power, sudden glimpses of betrayal or corruption, a slackening grip on integrity — all that glisters indeed. But, with no saving ironies, these brittle modern judgments lack the maturity and resonance of those moral tales which are their honourable progenitors.

There is no lack of compassion in Iain Crichton Smith's vision of human failings as embodied in the inhabitants of **The Tenement**. Alas, his detachment is over-scrupulous and, within their severe setting, his schematised characters emerge as thin case histories in the psychology of misery and frustration — with the single exception of his self-doubting, guilt-ridden poet. □

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Shorter reviews

The Last Dissenter: H.N. Brailsford and His World
F.M. LEVENTHAL *Oxford* £25

Many would argue that H.N. Brailsford was the most prominent Labour journalist of the first part of the 20th century. His family was radical stock whose ancestors had fought against Charles I. As a young man he became an expert on Balkan affairs and actively defended the Greek cause in 1897.

Professor Leventhal's book is an admirably detailed academic biography of Brailsford. Anyone interested in the history of the Labour movement will find it important. Leventhal shows that Brailsford's world, as embraced by the title, included most of the major figures in socialist politics, among them Ramsay MacDonald, Stafford Cripps, Patrick Gordon Walker, Harry Pollit, Palme Dutt, Dalton, Bevan and Victor Gollancz.

Leventhal stresses that Brailsford's 'abhorrence of bloodshed and unswerving allegiance to English liberties were the lodestars of his world, as deeply rooted as his concern for the oppressed'. It was as a journalist that Brailsford made his mark, and it was Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman*, who often reassured him that his first duty was as a journalist. By 1919 he had made his reputation, but he suffered acutely the dissatisfaction of all journalists who realise that what they write is ephemeral. His most important work, and in many ways it was the culmination of his career, was as the editor of the *New Leader*. His greatest disappointment was when he lost the editor's chair to Fenner Brockway in 1922.

Subsequently his career with the *New Statesman* flourished. Under Kingsley Martin's editorship he was a regular writer of leaders and long essays. In the dark days of 1940, the *New Statesman* board voted him a bonus of £100 'in recognition of his long and very unusual services to the paper'. His closeness to Martin is shown in his pondering what action to take in the event of a Nazi invasion: he wrote, 'Kingsley says he'll disguise himself as a clergyman and vanish into the provinces. I might try to do something of the kind too.'

He was a seminal influence in Labour thinking. His judgment on Voltaire stands as an appropriate judgment on himself: 'He preached, as the one sufficient commandment, the love of one's fellow-men, and made it concrete and vital, by his relentless assault upon every form of cruelty.'

Brian Martin

The Politics of Nursing
JANE SALVAGE *Heinemann* £4.95

This is not a kind book; nursing has been near killed with nurses' own kindness. The reality of NHS cuts, acute stress (about 45 per cent of nurses smoke), racism, hierarchy, the suppression of the individual (in the cause of 'professionalism') and the divisions between the Royal College and the unionised auxiliaries are not a pretty spectacle.

The 'angels' image does nurses little service either. Instead of skills given their just reward, there's the bamboozling of (mainly) women and the exploitation of their time and 'better natures'. The entry of men into the profession, said to provide the management muscle that women couldn't find among themselves, hasn't helped; men simply reach senior positions at three times the speed. Fobbed off with public admiration, praised to the sky but politically abandoned by doctors (whom, to the delight of Mills & Boon, they persist in marrying), nurses are often their own worst enemies. Currently they are obsessed by that professionalism, which means that nursing education is a third-rate copy of the medical model and that nurses daren't strike; they forget that other professions don't strike only because they have no need. In Israel recently doctors had need, and did.

Jane Salvage, a founder of the Radical Nurses Group, writes as an angry feminist and a furious nurse, castigating many enemies. Still, she leaves a lot unsaid; about the way in which the professions appropriated health care in the first place, for instance, or the effects on developing countries of exporting our care models *via* 'expert' advisers, which we busily do. And it won't do to denounce the flattering of a spurious female image — all loving-kindness and domesticity — and then to claim that actually women really *are* better nurses because etc, etc.

We undoubtedly needed provoking. But 'the book that every nurse has been waiting for', as the blurb claims? Another fond caricature, I fear.

Jo Hugh-Jones

The Son of Prophecy: Henry Tudor's Road to Bosworth
DAVID REES *Black Raven Press* £8.95 & £3.95

This admirably compact book deals with the tangle of dates and dynasties, battles and offices of the period from Bolingbroke to Richard III; or rather from Glendower to the merging in Henry Tudor of the candidates for 'Son of Prophecy', for this is a history of Wales, the sequence leading to Bosworth Field seen from a Welsh perspective. The youngest Tudor is selected as 'prophetic son' only when the elder candidates of the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions in Wales for this mantle give way to the more pressing claim. And, as this indicates, the matter of Wales is throughout pressured by English events.

Prophecy is the book's thematic link, prophecy spurred to national consciousness by Glendower's campaign vindicates the years of Welsh suppression. But it is the undertow of this prophecy David Rees delineates; the changes in Welsh society these years are bringing about. Though a logical way to learn about this society and its history, the book is no primer easing the novice into a knowledge of Wales. Rees's history is analytical and, cautiously, challenging; his placing of the Tudor line within the Welsh ambition gives a new slant to this kingship's antecedents and purpose. Obligatory genuflection is always made to the Tudors' Welsh background and 'symbolism', but in this different, Welsh, perspective this symbolism serves a *Welsh* purpose. And, rooted in the losing and keeping of heads, the see-sawing of often lethal power and the march to that last battle, the tradition and consciousness the Tudors espoused suddenly seems more real. Albeit symbolic, and Rees is sophisticated about this throughout, it is significant, for it is the matter of Britain that really determines this perspective. As an ambition it is revealing, as reality it makes an exciting tale.

Angela Harding

Among this week's contributors:

Christopher Meade won the George Orwell Memorial Award last year for his play *We Two Boys*; he runs workshops on masculinity and sexism for male youth workers, trainee social workers and boys.

Nina Hibbin was herself a full-time Mass Observer.

Malcolm Imrie is the literary editor of *City Limits*.

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THEATRE

Great presence, but is it acting?

Benedict Nightingale

Lauren Bacall holding back

Sweet Bird of Youth
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS *Haymarket*
Destiny
DAVID EDGAR *Half Moon*

'A GREAT ACTRESS,' idolatrously burbled the man behind me when he realised that the prone figure in the big double bed on the big Haymarket stage was none other than Lauren Bacall. But, on the evidence of the performance she then proceeded to give, that was a half-truth only. If greatness embraces charisma and effortless command of the theatre, she's great all right. The question, or so it appears to me, is whether she's also an actress. If the specifications of that particular job include delving below the visible crust and investigating the hidden geology of character, then she wouldn't seem particularly well qualified for it.

She plays Alexandra del Largo, an aging Hollywood star in abject flight from what she has decided, it turns out prematurely, was a disastrous screen comeback. The prospect of public humiliation has led her to humiliate herself privately. Indeed, she's heavily into several of those consolations one associates with Tennessee Williams the man and the playwright: booze, drugs and the sexual attentions of a beachboy she has picked up somewhere on the road to nowhere. And this makes some pretty basic demands on the woman performing the part. She must be raddled, she must be sottish, she must be more than a little disgusting and more than a little disgusted with herself. This process can't go too far, or we won't credit the ending, in which dignity, authority and control reassert themselves and Alexandra the sleek killer-shark emerges more or less intact from the provincial swamp in which she's improbably buried herself; but the process must go a long way, or we'll be left with a play that might be by Beverley Hills Williams or Westchester County Williams or some other well-to-do Williams, but never by the great American poet of glandular angst and moral decay, Tennessee Williams himself.

That's precisely where Bacall lets down herself and us. She manages the odd moment of throaty irony and swaggering self-mockery, but nothing uglier, nothing darker. Mostly, she's svelte and cool and all those things one associates with her memory on the silver screen. It's easy to believe in her when she imperiously informs an under-manager, who is trying to evict her and her embarrassing gigolo from the room they've hired, that she regards herself as on speaking terms only with hotel owners. It's harder when she has to look into her heart, stomach and bowels and vomit up feelings of dread or panic or self-contempt. That sort of acting needs courage, of course, since it asks its practitioners publicly to admit that they know, know intimately, what it's like to be brought lower than most of us care to conceive; but it's an essential courage, if blandness is to be avoided, bite sustained. Lauren Bacall would not seem to possess it.

Of course, the **Sweet Bird of Youth** that emerges may be more to the taste of the average Haymarket punter than the *Sweet Bird* that could and should have emerged. The more inhibited sort of English theatregoer has always found Williams overblown, melodramatic, and worse; and even the uninhibited would have to admit that this is a pretty sensational play. After all, what of the other main character, Alexandra's tame sex-athlete, Chance Wayne? Here he is, back in the town of his birth, doggedly conspiring to win back the girl he seduced years before and still thinks he loves, Heavenly Finley. What he doesn't know is that the surgeons have had to cut out the womb he managed to infect with VD. What he also fails to recognise, at least until lateish in the evening, is quite how vengeful this has left Heavenly's father, a Bible Belt demagogue with impeccable illiberal credentials. Castration is the sentence handed down from that wisteria-covered mansion, and it's a punishment which Alexandra's last-gasp entreaties can't stop Chance accepting as inevitable and maybe even just.

No doubt this tells us something about the psychopathology of Williams himself, with his sense of sin and guilt, his yearning to atone for moral atrocities perpetrated long ago. But his gift was for transforming personal peculiarity into American and sometimes even universal confusions and conflicts. Exaggerated *Sweet Bird* may be, ill-constructed and worse it probably also is, but it still bangs across a view of human nature that few will be able altogether to disown. Williams would agree with everything but the last two words of the American philosopher who wrote that humankind is 'halfway between an ape and a god, and travelling in the right direction'. For him, less of an optimist than most of his fellow-citizens, simian glands and brainboxes play too strong a part in most people's moral make-up for them to get more than midway up any Mount Olympus.

You can see why Harold Pinter wanted to direct what is, surprisingly, the play's belated London première. His work, too, has often involved the savagery beneath the skin. But Bacall is not, I fear, his production's only disappointment. Michael Beck emphasises what's ordinary, earnest and anxious in the tarnished golden boy, Chance, missing both the sexual conceit and the desperation; and James Grout is too strenuously angry and self-assertive as the vindictive Boss Finley. Still, at least he gets you thinking about the fascist mentality, at least he gives me an excuse for recommending David Edgar's treatment of the subject in its British forms and varieties.

Destiny more than merits its brisk and energetic revival at the Half Moon, though it has, I suppose, dated somewhat since its première in 1977. These days chauvinism and paranoia and Poujadiste resentment scarcely need a fringe party to express them, since they've found a comfy enough habitat and haven on the right wing of the party in power. Yet what will happen if the economy continues to weaken, unemployment to rise, the Tories to collapse? So *Destiny* remains what it originally was, a wise and useful warning — all the more so because it seeks always to understand frustrations, explain angers, not self-indulgently to deride and glibly to condemn. Indeed, its blend of questing intelligence and obvious commitment make it a model of what effective left-wing drama should be. □

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DANCE

School concert

Stephanie Jordan

London Contemporary Dance Theatre
Covent Garden

IT WAS LCDT's first royal gala at Covent Garden and called **A Celebration of Dance**. Magnanimously, it mixed jazz, breakdance, Graham-based work with a quota of ballet in MacMillan's choreographic vignettes and the presence of Natalia Makarova as compère. Alas, the Royal Gala Committee who devised this glamorous night need a little more practice at the Variety Show Special. Amid the embarrassing miscalculations and lurching continuity, I detected no fit celebration of the contribution that LCDT and its school have made to British dance over the last 18 years.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater opened the proceedings, a pleasant and exuberant troupe. Billy Wilson's piece set to Gershwin's Piano Concerto, though trite, was one of the more endearing parts of the programme. Michael Holman's New York City Breakers were the undoubted sensation: eight performers, youngsters and young men in a string of solos, a dazzling range of whirling, tumbling and twisting.

The evening sagged in the middle. There were three solos by MacMillan for LCDT's Christopher Bannerman and Linda Gibbs and former member Ross McKim. MacMillan never was blessed with a sparkling wit and his ridiculous portrayal of Bannerman as the exercising pugilist who finally succumbs to Bach does not challenge my opinion. All three solos demonstrate MacMillan's view of modern dance as composed of nervous creatures, perennially fussing and frequently floor-bound.

Meanwhile, Makarova was groping for the appropriate comments to link up all this diffuse material. When she engaged the long incomparable Zizi Jeanmaire in conversation, gremlins in the miking system added to the impression of amateurism. Still trading on the verve/chic which immortalised her in the early Fifties, Jeanmaire dutifully kicked legs, wiggled hips, partnered by an Italian male clone (Luigi Bonino) in Roland Petit's *Cheek to Cheek*. It was daft and *très sexy* around and upon a table. I ask myself why there is so much Petit around. Probably because his ephemera best suit such tacky occasions.

After pallid compliments from the henpecked Lord (Gowrie), it was left to the LCDT dancers to raise the tone, which they amply did, in a fervent display of their technical skill and courage in Cohan's *Class*. This was a refreshing break from the previous pandering and smirking to the audience.

During the same week, in contrast, it was encouraging to see the London Contemporary Dance School's workshop at the home Place Theatre, featuring a high standard of performance and vigorous ideas from the second years. The programme ended in revivals of three works by the American modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey, original and uncompromising material, like *Water Study*, her silent exploration of wave motion, and *The Shakers*, her theatricalised treatment of a ritual dance, meticulously taught by Ernestine Stodelle. Here was a much more fitting celebration of London Contemporary Dance than that at the Garden. □

MUSIC

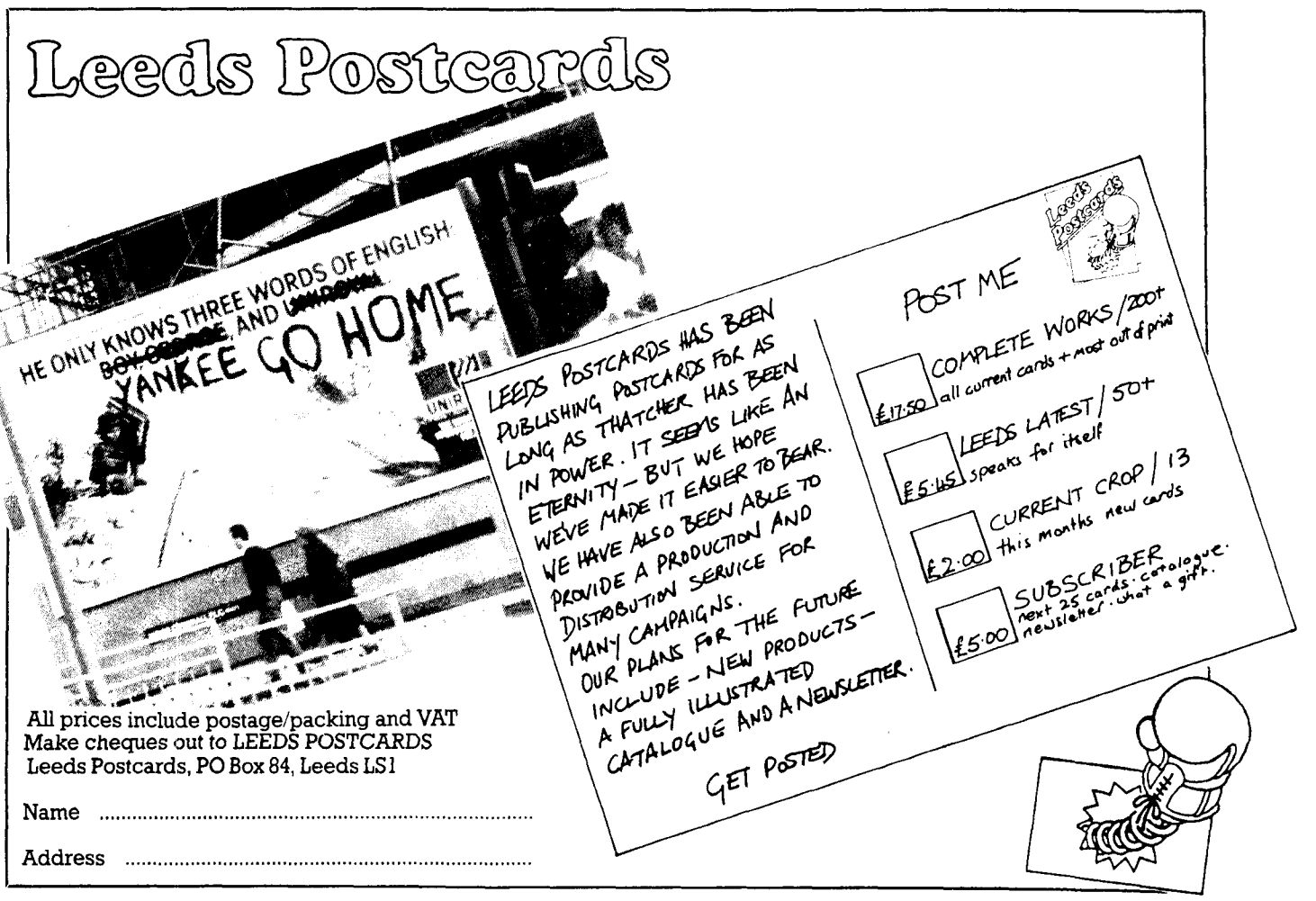
Possessed by death

Andrew Clements

Almeida Festival

WHAT BEGAN rather half-heartedly five years ago has burgeoned suddenly into a contemporary-music festival of exhilarating scope and international relevance. The Almeida Festival began its resurgence last year in a newly refurbished theatre with a focus on music theatre and systems music.

This time the four-week season boasted no less than four fully explored themes, any one of which would have satisfied a less thrusting and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enthusiastic organisation. American experimentalists, the composers who followed in the wake of Charles Ives, dominated the opening concerts, with personal appearances by Lou Harrison, Virgil Thompson, Conlon Nancarrow and Morton Feldman; then there was a celebration of the tango, centred upon Astor Piazzolla; a survey of French contemporary music, with visits by the ensemble L'Itineraire and the Groupe Vocal de France, and finally a homage to the French Canadian composer Claude Vivier who was murdered two years ago.

The Vivier tribute was in prospect the most intriguing element of all. One can find his name in the latest edition of *Baker's Biographical Dictionary* but he is not included in *New Grove* and the whole story of his short life and music has already been cocooned in multi-layers of reminiscence and semi-myth. He was born in Montreal in 1948, studied composition first with Gilles Tremblay and later Stockhausen and was found strangled in a Paris flat in 1983. Friends now recall a man consistently obsessed with death and with recurrent images of his own murder, and whose music worked through the same vein of morbidity and religiosity.

The Almeida concerts offered a very comprehensive coverage of Vivier's output, most of which had never been heard in Britain before: works for a wide variety of medium, early choral pieces written in Stockhausen's composition class, chamber and orchestral works and a chamber opera, **Kopernikus** (1980), which formed the climax of the series. In the opera, subtitled *Rituel de Mort*, many of Vivier's preoccupations come together — the guilt-ridden religion, reeking of incense, the strange infusion of history and myth, and the deliberately laconic, understated music, whose drama is enacted as a terse rite, often incomprehensible in detail when the text mingles high-flown French with an invented language of Vivier's own.

I have to admit to profound boredom through 75 per cent of *Kopernikus*, even though it lasts only just over an hour. What little of Vivier's earlier music I had heard held the attention through its eclectic harmonies, its clear sense of focus, even its charmingly obvious debt to Messiaen. In the opera that colourful side of his creative personality is deliberately suppressed. The scraps of thematic material which surface through the splintered, spikily scored textures are never allowed to develop lives of their own; the vocal lines eschew fully flown lyricism and frequently resort to Stockhausen-like phonemes and harmonics. In a totally successful production perhaps it might become an engrossing experience in which the music assumes a hypnotic intensity. Somehow, though, I have my doubts. There was not too much wrong with the Almeida staging, spare and direct and as austere as the work itself. It was also splendidly sung — by Mary King as the central character Agni, whose trials and half-real, half-imaginary encounters form the central thread of the work around which all the other cultural allusions are woven, and by supporting singers of equal commitment.

Despite the efforts of the Festival, though, the case for Vivier as one of the truly significant composers of the last 20 years remains unproven. □

NEW YORK THEATRE

Boys and girls come out to play

Victoria Radin

A PHOTOGRAPH of Brooke Shields, her biceps proudly flexing a bar-bell, advertises a chain of New York health clubs in the newspapers. There is more than a hint of the pretty man about the former Pretty Baby. The feeling she gives off, in common with the girls and women jogging or just walking their thick-muscled thighs in shorts into the corner store (for a Diet Pepsi and a quart of chocolate ice cream) is smug, secretive and asexual. It is rather nasty as well: and the whole sense of it is amply reflected in the current New York theatre season, where girls are boys and boys are girls and the idea that God made two sexes seems a terrible mistake.

Even Neil Simon has joined the throng of gender-benders. With two big hits already on Broadway, he, or his investment adviser, appears to be persuaded that the author's 20-year-old male comedy, **The Odd Couple**, could rise again from the ashes of time dressed in a skirt. The result is a good example of creating a sow out of a silk wallet, but does it presage a trend? Will we next see *Death of a Saleswoman* (perhaps, *Salesperson*)?

In his new and much odder couple, Rita Moreno plays Olive (originally Oscar, and acted by Walter Matthau), a slobby divorcée who hosts a hen party once a week. In Simon's original stag party the men played poker; now the girls enjoy Trivial Pursuit, a useless knowledge contest (who pitched that no-hitter for Cincinnati in 1958?) which offers the author large possibilities for one-liners — some of them pseudo-titillatingly blue. Women, when they get together, as every female person knows, do not talk about baseball but about themselves. Simon seems unaware of this: indeed he seems positively determined not to let on very much at all about his characters. On cue after a preparatory phone call enters Florence, played by Sally Struthers (originally Felix, played in the film by Jack Lemmon), a compulsive tidier whose husband has just dumped her; the two of them set up house together. Even in nasty Darwinian New York I think a wife, especially such a houseproud one as Florence, would be more likely to remain in the marital residence while her husband leaves; but such realities do not bother Simon, for without them he would not have a play.

What follows, in a show which incidentally is purveyed to us by microphone, greatly emphasising its air of fabricated unreality, is an evening of insult and victimisation which had its Broadway audience cackling with mirth. Simon invests Florence with every available actable phobia, to which Olive reacts in the same manner as Florence's estranged husband, that is sadistically. Ms Struthers is a warm actress, and goes through her tics, spectacular coughs and sobs with some appeal; Ms Moreno is initially attired for some reason in a turquoise shorts playsuit. (No actress in this play, in common with most plays on the commercial stage, ever wears anything that remotely resembles what any real-life woman would ever wear for any particular occasion; but then everyone in this play, in the great commercial theatre tradition, is unclassifiable, belonging only to the genus of the Stage Character.) Ms Moreno is forced into an increasingly masculine characterisation to which she responds by taking heavier strides and making jabbing movements with her arms. One ends by feeling that the new *Odd Couple* would be a lot less odd and much funnier if it were actually played in drag.

The much younger Christopher Durang has always been puzzled by couples; particularly when they are parents, especially when they are his own. Most of his plays have tried to exorcise that odd couple who made him; in **The Marriage of Bette and Boo**, now at the

Old Holborn

John Levett

Adrift in suburban gardens
High peonies balloon,
The martin and the jay rehearse
Their thirty-first of June,

Clematis threads its argument
On trellises of blue,
The bald-faced moon ashamedly
Slips down the avenue

As six o'clock evaporates
And pond weeds coil and choke,
And dogged grass perks up again,
And monkey puzzles smoke.

Beyond the shouldered labyrinth
Of crescent, close and lane,
The cinder clicks its fingers,
The wind dives down each drain,

And plexiglass and chromium
Encode a fitful sun,
A futility of signals,
A desolate dry-run.

With pinks and flags the cityscape's
Perimeters are trim,
But certainties, like heavy men,
Make chances seem so slim,

As one stands by his window-box
And hangs this bluish net
Above the match that shakes to light
His dodgy cigarette.

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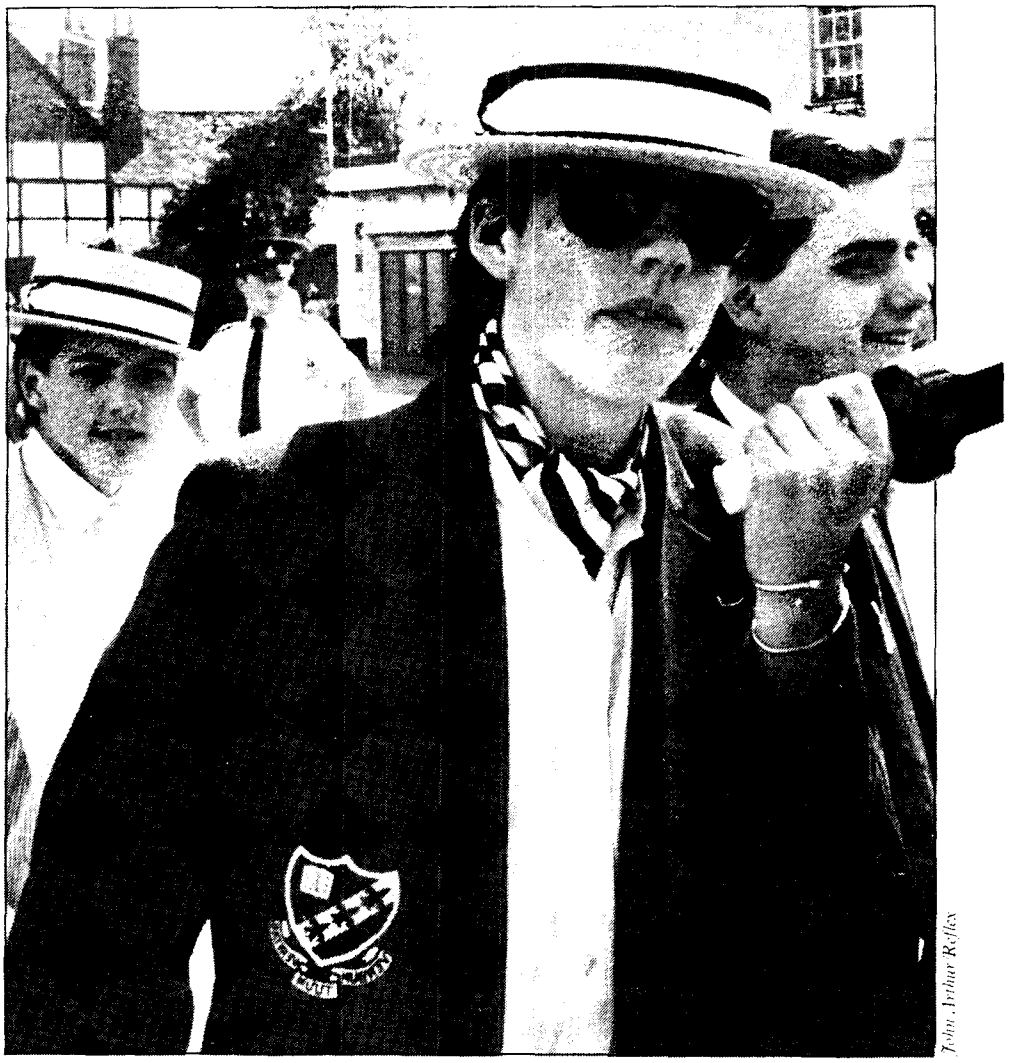
Public Theatre, the author himself actually acts the role of the son-cum-narrator. Thus we find Mr Durang coolly walking into the spotlight and looking on with bland contempt as the stage mother he has created, a Catholic like his own, helplessly gives birth to a succession of dead babies before dying painfully of cancer while his father becomes a senile alcoholic. There are also, *inter alia*, two warring sisters, one of whom makes regular visits to the loony bin, and a pair of rather Simonesque grandparents in which the husband is so relentless a verbal molester of his spouse that she counts herself lucky when she goes deaf. 'If you don't like someone be mean to them if you want,' he or one of the other nasties says, a line which was received without irony by the chic young-middle-aged audience, who cheered and applauded as if it had been handed down on a tablet by Ronald Reagan. The real world has come increasingly to resemble the universe of Alfred Jarry, an eternal schoolboy in whose fairly sadistic but grandiose clown shoes Mr Durang now palely loiters. What is needed is a little friendliness to human kind in Durang's style of small domestic black drama (in the US they call it 'absurdist', which makes it sound like a rare disease). The performances are whizz-bang slick and mainly vacuous and the production won heaps of awards: Mr Durang, a product of the Yale Drama School, helps some people to confuse meanness with significance — and what could be more wonderful?

Meanwhile Herb Gardner gets mostly clobbered by the critics for showing himself to be an old Sixties socialist softie in **I'm Not Rappaport**, now showing off-Broadway after its initial outing in Seattle. The setting is quintessential New York: a bench in Central Park (shades of Albee's *Zoo Story*) on which two male octogenarians, one black and one white, strike up some kind of communication. All about them youthful muggers, drug dealers, psycho-babbling, jogging leaders of tenants' associations and daughters who've sold out to the suburbs are beating the hell out of one another, one way or another, but here we have a grouchy but spiritually healthy little oasis. It's sentimental enough, and very schematic, but well characterised and Cleavon Little as the practical-minded black and Judd Hirsch as the iconoclastic disaster-prone idealist Jew to whom the author's heart goes out in great measure are very beautiful to watch.

Finally, genders are bent over backwards in **Vampire Lesbians of Sodom**, named after the second piece of a double-bill which has transferred from the East Village to the West Village (a much greater psychic move than a geographical one). The first playlet takes place in Swinging Sixties London (why is it so many American drag and camp shows are set in England?); the second happens across the centuries and the US to two rival female vampire show business queens. One of these ladies is played by Charles Busch, the author; the other by Meghan Robinson. They play very well together and, while it's obvious that Mr Busch is a man in drag, I hope Ms Robinson, a TV sitcom actress by day, will not mind if I say that attempts to confound the audience on the truth her sexual identity are largely successful. Here we have a whole new way of looking and seeming not to be. □



John Arthur Reflex

Hooray Henley

Malcolm Imrie

'A PLACE a stockbroker or bookmaker, passing through in his car in peacetime on the way back to his centrally-over-heated flat in a London block, would designate as "very pretty" — a place to pass through, above all.' Superficially, Henley hasn't changed much from the quaint, soulless half-village, half-town described in Patrick Hamilton's 1947 classic *Slaves of Solitude*. 'Thames Lockdon' he called it: you can still retrace the footsteps of his forlorn heroine Miss Roach from the end-of-the-line railway station, along the river and left up the main street to the imaginary site of the Rosamund Tea Rooms where Hamilton's characters bickered their way through World War Two.

Today, of course, a lot of stockbrokers live there, carving up long stretches of the riverside into private enclaves. Henley's economy has been given a boost by the new entrepreneurs of the Silicon/Thames Valley. And, every July, it gets the social shot-in-the-arm that keeps its name alive — Regatta Week.

There, at least, nothing changes. The *Telegraph* tells you who won the boat races (few Regatta-goers actually watch them) while the rest of the press updates champagne and strawberry statistics. At the climax on Saturday night some silly bugger, senseless on Pimms, jumps off the bridge and drowns; a motor launch scuppers itself on a marker post. For the townspeople there's the fireworks and the spectacle of the ruling class's picturesque ruins falling down in the street. Plus a lot of money. Some pubs issue discreet badges to regulars, so they can avoid the huge mark-up on drinks.

I've often been to Henley, never before to the Regatta. But this year there was an added attraction: the anarchists of Class War were coming to town 'to take the fight right to the bastards' doorsteps'. There've been Right To Work marches through Henley in Regatta Week before now. Class War, however, weren't planning another weary symbolic protest: their paper made it clear they were out to wreck the place. 'Hardwear shops . . . stock a large range of makeshift weapons . . . If we can occupy the bridge they'll be well fucked.'

For a ten-page monthly paper, with rhetoric to match its skull-and-crossbones logo, *Class War* isn't doing badly. A circulation of 10,000, according to the only serious article on it/them (in *Time Out*). It may be the politics of despair, but for a lot of people it seems that beats the politics of resignation.

Its effect in Henley, at least, was dramatic.

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Articles filled the local press in a language to delight historians of rural panics. 'Hippies were said yesterday to be massing at Lambourne and Wantage, preparing to walk along the ancient Ridgeway into south Oxfordshire and on to Henley to join anarchists.' Rumours spread. Was it 500 extra police or 5000? Were army units barracked in nearby schools? Would the FBU refuse to turn hosepipes on the mob and let the town burn to the ground? The lawyer for *City Limits* removed a neutral listing of the event. 'Incitement to riot,' or something.

Trouble was, *they weren't there*. Not the anticipated army of 'unemployed and unemployable, pissed on and pissed off.' Not so's you'd notice. There *were* hundreds of police, guarding the bridge, the pubs and, for all I know, the telephone exchange; there were bouncers, vigilantes and small, unpleasant-looking men from Securicor. But the Enemy didn't show. By mid-afternoon on the Saturday some 200 'anarchists' (i.e. young people dressed approximately as punks, skins or greasers) were scattered round town in small groups. A few tried crossing the bridge to marquee city but were turned back because of a newly discovered byelaw denying right of way to those not wearing blazers or summer frocks. A few arrests; a little damage. On the outskirts, someone overturned a BMW.

Which doesn't mean there was no overt hostility to the rich, or the police — but those jeering contempt or muttering hatred weren't just the conspicuous outsiders (and a good number of the 'anarchists' were locals). Henley was far from united in enthusiasm for the Regatta.

And, as several residents pointed out, it wasn't simply the police and the Panic that made this Regatta different. The wealthy were more numerous than ever, and more confident. Post-politicos who find class categories obsolete could have learned much on that sweltering afternoon among the marquees. For every florid-faced relic of another age nodding off in the shade, there were half-a-dozen newly-gilded youths glowing in the sun. There were plenty of Hooray Henrys, far exceeding any parody; but they were outnumbered by young men whose blazers and white trousers were more fashionably cut, with hard, tomorrow-belongs-to-me faces. Nobody's going to be saying cheerio to this particular class in a hurry.

Plodding up the High Street, I met a friend, a stalwart of the libertarian left, plodding down. He had a large camera. 'Bit old for this, aren't you squire?' he greeted me. So was he. Too old, certainly, for Class War, but too young to miss the chance of what might, at least, have been a class skirmish. And there were one or two incidents worth the train fare. On a strip of public grass by the bridge, a dozen punks were enjoying the sun and the attentions of a queue of desperate journalists. Moored alongside was the *m.v. Grandee*, its captain conspicuously eavesdropping. After a while, he approached two nearby policemen. 'I've identified the *ringleader*,' he announced proudly. 'It's that chappie in the blue shirt.' 'Very grateful, sir,' replied one politely. 'We'll ensure the information is passed on to HQ immediately.' But it wasn't, for some reason. The man who brought terror to the Thames is still at large. And there's always next year. □

TELEVISION

Andrew Rissik

Glad all over

I RECALL once reading an interview with Dave Clark in which he blamed the escalating technical wizardry of the 24-track recording studio for bringing to an end that infectious, innovative vibrancy which seemed to mark the heyday of Sixties pop. Installed behind the drumkit of the Dave Clark Five — whose relentless, thumping beat was a musical trademark — Clark looked clean, happy and vacuous. He never had Mick Jagger's gyrating pantomime insolence or the melodic talent and droll wit of John Lennon or McCartney; he couldn't sing like Paul Jones and he wasn't moody or weird like Georgie Fame or Eric Burdon. Musically, his group was always in the second division, but Clark possessed a canny entrepreneurial mind and, while the Five were good business, he managed them, wrote their material and supervised their recordings.

Now, two decades later, he is a rich man with a thriving business empire, and he owns the cult Sixties pop showcase, **Ready, Steady, Go!** which is being repeated on Channel Four. Much of the allure of these hypnotic excursions into nostalgia lies in the informality and giddy optimism which they communicate so vividly. The myth of Swinging London always implied a kind of free-flowing international party, a mad, Gatsby sort of affair in which the era's icons danced casually among the crowd till dawn.

In *Ready, Steady, Go!* it's there — incontestably — on the screen: John Lennon talks pert and fools about when interviewed by the rather square Keith Fordyce; Ringo jives madly with the studio audience while Dusty Springfield, crowned with that blonde, bouffant hairdo, flicks her hands and weaves gracefully through the throng; Paul McCartney judges a Brenda Lee look-alike contest; Georgie Fame sings 'Yeh Yeh' amidst a pool of rapt well-wishers; Paul Jones of Manfred Mann throws himself about with delirious rhythmic enthusiasm; Brian Jones talks into the mike like an earnest child; Jagger struts and wiggles his buttocks, always a bit camp, always on the edge of sending everything up.

In comparison, BBC1's **Top of the Pops** is a lacklustre and institutionalised carnival with everyone going through the motions. Sparked into life from time to time by a good video, it's otherwise as tired and perfunctory as *Doctor Who*. To look at, *Ready, Steady, Go!* is rough, clumsy and amateurish, but its mood — its swirl of enthusiasm — breathes an infectious and sustained excitement.

Watching this programme and being, anyway, a shameless devotee of much of the era's music, I am in no mood to contest Dave Clark's verdict. There was something insane, pretentious and overblown about the following decade's attempt to elevate the competent but mediocre instrumentalist to the status of a Wagnerian orchestral composer. Bands like Pink Floyd, Cream and Yes housed an incipient megalomania, suggesting that instrumental dexterity was in itself a creative act. Rick Wakeman went solo to write gargantuan concept albums of enormous orchestral size and thunderous musical banality. Mike Oldfield, ever obsessed with the new textures which sound mixing could produce, took rhythmic and orchestral novelty to a point of repetitive idiocy.

The coming of Punk threw off much of this superfluous technical apparatus, and it had a driving energy that was fierce and invigorating, but it failed to right the uneasy balance between melody and percussion, between rhythm and the song. Much of what has followed has been mere dance music.

The musical revelation of the extraordinary rock concert **Live Aid For Africa** (BBC) — I watched 14 of the 16 hours — was that, far too often, the oldest songs came off best. McCartney sang 'Let It Be', the Beach Boys revived 'Good Vibrations', Patti Labelle drenched 'Imagine' with blues-loaded passion, Bryan Ferry crooned through 'Jealous Guy', Elvis Costello gave us a dark, sardonic 'All You Need Is Love', Mick Jagger and David Bowie belted out a mad, insolent video of 'Dancing in the Streets', and Bob Dylan, rock's tottering head prefect, brought the show to a shambolic, rather stunned climax with 'Blowin' in the Wind'.

Over the whole event hung the shadow of Woodstock, of the fractured folky idealism of singers like Joni Mitchell and Melanie, of the electrifying acid-rock of Jefferson Airplane, of those burnt-out Sixties summers where people wore caftans and listened, through a reverential, drug-induced haze, to Sergeant Pepper. The concert's rudimentary sound, its transparent idealism and the gentle, warm-hearted fervour with which it was so unmistakably received, revived the lost purpose and naivety of that decade. Socially, *Live Aid* was an act of philanthropy on an unprecedented scale. Musically, it was some kind of an elegy.

Sixties music eventually proved that simplicity of line is not necessarily simplicity of thought. In the Beatles, Britain discovered that there was a way of putting melody and the lyric back into the percussive framework of rock 'n' roll. The American achievement was, I think, greater: dark, complex and fraught with dreams. The sweet harmonies of the Beach Boys, those rolling anthems performed by Bob Dylan and the jaunty exuberance of Tamla Motown (described brilliantly by a French critic as 'cocktail soul') led to the mordant, sour and introverted world conjured up by the Byrds, Jim Morrison and the Doors and that howling, screaming guitar played with virtuoso hysteria and doomed energy by Jimi Hendrix. In *Live Aid* only Phil Collins and Sting, playing a set together, managed to cast off the mantle of the Sixties. Collins — who performed at Wembley and then jetted off to New York to play there — is, alongside Springsteen, probably the best of the batch. Muscular, virile and rich in streetwise poetry, his music makes *Ready, Steady, Go!* seem awfully dated. □

Note

We apologise for the absence of the film column; it will be back next week.

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Naseem Khan

Flies a kite

YOU WOULD have seen an extraordinary sight if you'd made your way out of Huddersfield the other Sunday. Not the puffing, panting runners slogging doggedly past knots of people on street corners, but something better. Look carefully at the sky as the road winds its way higher and higher, and you'd see some odd little dots over Castle Hill. Not dots in fact, but kites — kites galore: West Indian kites, Chilean kites, good old-fashioned diamond kites . . .

Huddersfield's yearly Kite Day — a grand assembly of the unexpected, the daft and the beautiful — began through sheer accident. It started with a casual conversation between Graham Marsden, local banner-maker, and Vercel Pinnock of the Caribbean Association. Somehow it turned to kites, and the discovery that both were enthusiastic kite-fliers. Even more, Marsden discovered that kites were a strong part of Caribbean folk culture: strongest maybe in the Leeward Isles, but popular throughout. The next step hardly needed stating; they would set up a Kite Day themselves.

Castle Hill saw the first Kite Day in 1983. The turn-out surprised them both. The only advertising had been by word of mouth but nevertheless a surprising number came staggering up steep Castle Hill. No set event awaited them. An ad hoc committee — working with Kirklees District Council — organised the day (then as now), but its object was to minimise the degree of organisation. There were no categories, no competitions. There were no heats to determine high fliers or the best or the most elaborate designs. Kite Day was simply a day for doing.

The essential quality of that first Kite Day, apart from a few of the appurtenances of festivals — some dun-coloured lavatories, a car park, inflatables and the unavoidable icecream vans, is still there. Kite Day is still something you come along to do rather than watch. Even Work in Progress flew its first kite, and very agreeable it was.

Constant though the special quality of Kite Day is, participation has steadily grown. Five hundred blue and white posters around Huddersfield and environs may not seem much but they brought in this year hundreds of people.

It was hard to tell how many kites were in the air. They had a distressing habit of moving around the minute you tried to count them, and Castle Hill's topography provides a grassy ledge on one side where a heap more people were busy kite-flying, unnoticed from the top. Nevertheless, I'd still reckon a hundred in the air at one early point would not have been too wild a guess.

And what kites. There were the West Indian kites, one of the stimulants for the day — big kites, their bamboo 'bones' set in a diagonal cross. A bit of paper cut in a particular way resulted in an eerie mellow hum for the type called 'Singers' explained some kids who'd been making kites with workshops run at Hudawi, Huddersfield's West Indian Association, proudly. Chilean kites have been a new addition, a result of another conversation: between Marsden and Pedro Fuentes, Chilean exile in Sheffield.

As the kites rise and fall over Castle Hill, Marsden himself is busy at a trestle table. Contending with a frisky breeze intent on taking off his materials, he — resplendent in red and yellow — is teaching people how to make instant kites. If you thought it was costly and complex, think again. You take a sheet of typing paper, fold it so, cut here and here. A few holes, a sellotaped paper tail and there, with a cotton reel and thread, was your instant flyable kite. But a lot of the kites otherwise are shop kites. There's a hawk sailing high up. A plastic comet with variegated tails plunges around in a downstream.

There's a long green coily snake being flown by Yorkshire Arts Association; kites with Spiderman, Darth Vadar, Mr T from the A Team on them. Some kites have two control lines, which means their owners have them bucking and rearing and they make a rapid, whishy sound as they tear about the sky. Mostly, though, people — young and old — are keen to get their kites up into the stiller air above. A few manage it spectacularly. A distant white kite floats ghost-like far over the valley. 'How long's your string?' I ask its flier. 'I dunno,' he answers glumly. 'I was just passing, and somebody said "Hold this a minute . . ."'

The pros come prepared. The owner of an august red kite hammers in a metal anchor before he puts his stately kite up. The line, tough and incredibly long, comes snaking off the roller as if it's part of a ship's rigging. But there are the cheap and cheerful kites, too. A kite made of black plastic rubbish bags bobs by. A traditional white diamond kite sports a tail decorated with scraps of material and a crumpled up Mothers Pride wrapper. There's a blue homemade CND kite, paper kites, tissue kites, plastic kites, cotton kites. Just about anything that can catch a gust of wind can in fact be a kite.

It's a quiet activity: squeals from the children on the inflatables on the far side of the hill; a snatch of music from a white-faced itinerant band of players, setting up a performance of their play. Random bits of conversation as people talked — 'Stop that, behave yourself!' — to their kites. But otherwise it's serene, the major noise the rushing of the kites in the lower air streams. It's a perfect day, compared with last year's rain and the first year's slow winds, sunny, with convenient frisky breezes. The band walk by — accordion, saxophone, flute. Come and see, they call, 'a performance of such magnitude as never seen on Castle Hill'. Yet you look at the sky where countless kites are streaming serenely high up in the wind, quietly like boats at anchor, and it could strike you that you'd already seen a show of greater magnitude. □

Weekend competition

No 2882 **Set by May Day**

For when the government gets round to privatising police stations, law courts, prisons, could we please have advertisements extolling the particular charms of one such institution? Max. 150 words by 31 July.

No 2879 **Set by T.A. Dyer**

Academic articles from the year 2585 expounding the mythic significance of such legendary figures as Margaret Thatcher.

Report **By Di Dact**

The cricket season appears to have gone to young Master Polglaze's head (a most curious piece about I. T. Botham, Polglaze), but the rest of you, for whatever reason, are in especially fine fettle. So twelve pounds apiece to those printed below and a gold star each to the rest.

The cult of William the White-Lord dates from the latter half of the 20th century. Although his followers claim him as a real person, a close reading of surviving documents (where he is invariably — and significantly — called the White Law) shows this to be false. He was never present at tribal gatherings in 'The House', being 'called on' or 'appealed to' by the leader in time of crisis.

A philosopher of the ancient world, Carl Jung, pointed out that in periods of confusion men 'seek for a sign' of perfection or wholeness. William the White-Lord, who is always depicted as moon-faced and perfectly spherical, clearly filled this need. Sayings attributed to him are always of an anodyne and propitiatory nature.

There is a strong parallel here with Buddha, an Eastern deity whom he strongly resembles.

NOEL PETTY

Until recently ethnologists accepted 'Princess Di' as an historically existing person — probably a member or associate of the ruling dynasty — largely on the grounds of extensive photo-images among surviving 20th-century documents.

However, the inference that photo-images testify to the prior material existence of a person or event betrays a grave defect in method. Examination of the mythic patterns of pre-thermonuclear civilisation *at a structural level* reveals that the mythemes 'Princess Di' and 'Bingo' almost always occur in conjunction, suggesting a single paradigm. Since we already know that Bingo was a fabled source of riches, an imaginary consolation for the impoverished plebs of the time, it seems probable that Princess Di was a ruler or presiding deity of this realm, a figure venerated among the poor as 'Max Headroom' was by the young.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

This god of luck — Ma-ting, Martin l'Ami or Amis — especially invoked by parents wishing male offspring, is an ancient eschatological deity given a Western face and flavour as a consequence of the enormous American influence on China at the end of the 20th century. There is no record of any Martin l'Ami or Amis in the *Encyclopaedia Humana* (ed. 2584) or *La Biographie Universelle* (Pochot — 2583). Tin-tin was a young male French folk-hero in the 20th-century, Mars an old Western deity and martini a drink of sexual potency, and we have a case of obvious name-blending. The use of 'l'ami' is parallel to the Furies being placatorily called Eumenides. The cult is strongest among the illiterate troglodytes with a male-centred hunting economy.

GEORGE MOOR

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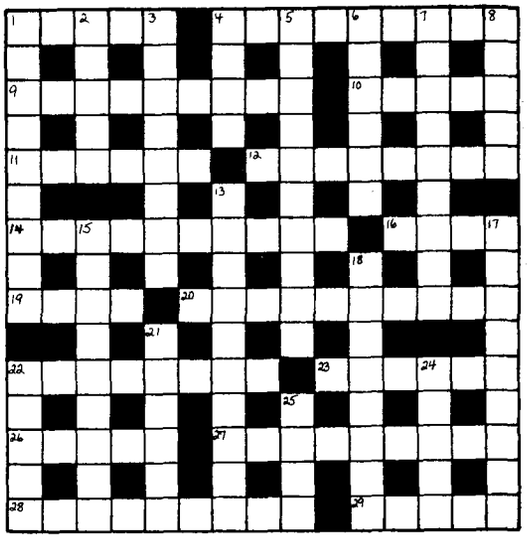
Weekend Crossword 1486

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1486, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 6 August.



Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

ACROSS

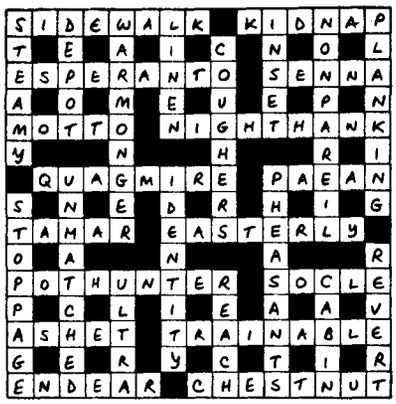
1. It grows when the sun gets back into the place where the flowers are (5)
4. Wrongly fear there is a future (9)
9. Write around to an Arab country for a servant-girl (9)
10. Lash used in punishing youth on good evidence (5)
11. Girl who starts well in Greek and has a fine finish (6)
12. Does gain, oddly enough, when under stress (8)
14. After a cry of warning a playwright holds a party to give advance notice (10)
15. Either way it is a girl (4)
19. Gilbert is after you for the trees (4)
20. Animals go without an article made with iron in these celebrations (10)
22. Not likely to survive, like a bone in a grave (8)
23. Entertainment which gives the old lady a nice change (6)
26. I went round the twist (5)
27. Appropriate flower for people following a vehicle (9)
28. The slings are redesigned to secure mobility (9)
29. Journalist gets round staff to make corrections (5)

DOWN

1. Insect which makes food go quickly (9)
2. Garment for Ronaldson? (5)
3. Dejected at loss of feathers? (8)
4. Tory returned (4)
5. Be stranded like a scold during rugby matches (3,7)
6. Temporary performance (6)
7. You desert in large numbers (9)
8. Got angry when the right declined in vigour (5)
13. Tent made out of Barnet lace (10)
15. Profitable cartel set up around the eastern district (9)
17. Did not indulge although a couch has a dirty mark in it (9)
18. Inform about one caught being the reverse of offensive (8)
21. Thing which makes one refuse assent (6)
22. There is a bit of dust left in this accommodation (5)
24. Chosen from novel items rarely seen (5)
25. Cockney hurts his limbs (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1484



Prizewinners to 1484

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Closing date for return of completed application forms is:
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CAPITAL, London's public transport unions' and users' campaign, is expanding its staff to four, to include an Administrative Assistant. S/he will be responsible for the general administration of the office, servicing the CAPITAL membership and Management Committee, and assisting with the typing and production of reports and publications.

The successful applicant will be able to type, have some knowledge of book-keeping and computer experience (we are about to purchase an IBM PC). A commitment to CAPITAL's campaign, and the ability to work as part of a small team will also be important.

The post is GLC-funded, although CAPITAL receives an increasing proportion of its income from other sources. **Further details and an application form are available from CAPITAL, 308 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 or phone 01-833 4022. Completed forms should be returned by 29 July.**

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HOSPITALITY & COMFORT Welsh Hills. Dinner, B. & B. £67 p.w. Bonner, Bron Fadog, Trefriw, LL27 0QA. Tel. Llanrwst (0492) 640566.

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LISTINGS

SAT 20 JULY

LONDON Conference — The Labour Party & Black Membership at County Hall, SE1. Jo Richardson MP on NEC Document on Black Sections, Fiona McTaggart on Civil Liberties and the divided family, plus workshops. **Timetable from Greater London Labour Party, 195 Walworth Rd, SE17 01-703 6511**

CROYDON Labour Party 'Peoples Fair' 7pm Whitehorse Recreation Ground, Whitehorse Rd. Entrance by Lucky Programme 20p. **Details: Croydon NW Labour Party 01-684 7470 (eves) 01-543 7369 (day).**

CRYSTAL PALACE 'End Sports Collaboration with Apartheid' Picket 7pm Main Entrance, Crystal Palace Sports Arena, off Anerley Hill, SE19. **Org. City Anti-Apartheid 01-837 6050.**

LONDON Nicaragua — 6th Anniversary of the Revolution — Dayschool & Concert Lambeth Town Hall. 11am-6.30pm Dayschool with workshop, films. Spkrs. incl. Jeremy Corbyn MP, ANC, Valerie Wise GLC. Adm. £2/£1.50 UB40. 8.30pm-midnight Concert with 'African Connection', 'Sonido de Londress'. Adm. £3/£2.50 UB40. **Details Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign 01-359 8982/354 0844.**

GLASGOW Public meeting of Campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act. 11am. McLellan Galleries. Creche. **Details: W. of Scotland Campaign against PTA 041-332 1132.**

SUN 21 JULY

HAMPSTEAD African National Congress/Anti-Apartheid Movement fundraising Booksale 11am-5pm Hampstead Community Centre, 78 Hampstead High Street, NW3. Adm. 10p. Disabled access. Brand new and secondhand book bargains. **Org. Anti-Apartheid Movement, 13 Mandela St, NW1. 01-387 7966.**

FINSBURY PARK Sponsored Walk for Chile — 20 Kilometres through back ways and woodlands of N. London. Meet 12 noon Seven Sisters Rd gates, Finsbury Park. **Sponsorship forms/walkers phone CSC, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, N7. 01-272 4298.**

LONDON 'The Politics of Anglo-Jewry, talk by Dr. Geoffrey Alderman 7pm Friends' International Centre, Torrington Pl. WC1. **Org. Jewish Socialists' Grp, BM3725, London WC1.**

MON 22 JULY

LONDON 'Labour's Economic Strategy' by Henry Neuberger, Economic Ass. to Neil Kinnock 8pm Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Rd, SE5. **Org. Southwark Fabian Soc.,**

TOOTING BEC 'Trident — Can it help prevent War?' Spkrs. Mike Gapes and spkr. from 'Peace through NATO'. 7.30pm St. Leonards Church Hall, Tooting Bec Gdns, SW16. Wheelchair access, creche (pls. ring). **Details: Lynn or Andy 01-671 0220.**

LONDON 'The Amazon Region' — the Last Frontier. Book launch and public meeting with Sue Brandford, author 'The Last Frontier', Marcus Colchester of Survival International, Charles Secrett of Friends of the Earth. 6.30pm Seminar Rm. ICA, Nash House, The Mall, SW1. Adm. Free. **Details: Jacki Heppard 01-387 8466.**

TUES 23 JULY

EPSOM 'The Church & Politics' by Rev. Sandy Morris. 8pm 6a Burgh Heath Rd. **Org. NE Surrey Fabian Soc. Details: Sam Greene Epsom 25010.**

LONDON 'On yer Bike' Launch of Labour Party's National Ride for jobs. 4.-6.30pm Jubilee Gdns, SE1. Live music, food, stalls.

WED 24 JULY

LONDON British School Building Brigade to Nicaragua report-back with slides of life on a state cotton farm and effects of US agression on people's lives. 7.30pm Finsbury Library, 245 St John's St, EC1. **Org. Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign.**

LONDON Lunch-time Mini Festival 12-2pm Finsbury Sq, EC1. 'Utingo' African Dance Grp, Sensible Footwear Theatre Grp, Janet Russell, folk songs. **Org. City Centre Info. Centre for Office Workers, Sophia Hs, 32-35 Featherstone St, EC1. 01-608 1338.**

LONDON Benefit for Dr Maire O'Shea 8pm-midnight Irish Centre, Murray Street, NW1. Music by Illegal Assembly. Bar until 11.30pm. Adm. £2/£1 UB40. **Org. Camden Campaign Against the PTA 01-772 4226.**

THURS 25 JULY

LONDON 'Symbolism & Androgyny' by Michele Cooper 7pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. Adm. 75p incls. refreshments. **Org. Progressive League Woman/Man Relationship Grp.**

LONDON '14 Years after Internment: The Struggle for Irish Freedom' Public Meeting 7.30pm Uni. of London Union, Malet St, WC1. Spkrs. from Irish Freedom Movement plus eye-witness accounts from recent events in Ireland. **Org. Irish Freedom Movement, BM IFM, WC1N 3XX 01-729 0414.**

FRI 26 JULY

BATTERSEA 'The Future of Black Performing Arts in Britain — equal opportunities or new direction?' start of 3-dy forum at Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, SW11. **Details: 01-223 8413.**

SAT 27 JULY

HIGHBURY Chile Solidarity Women's Fete 12-6pm. **Details Helen 01-272 4299.**

FORTHCOMING

30 JULY LONDON Radical Health Visitors Meeting 7pm Old Coffee House, 49 Beak St, W1. **Details: RHVG, C/O 9 Poland St, W1.**

5 AUG LONDON Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants Training Workshop 10am-4pm City Literary Inst. Stukely St, WC2. Course aims to introduce basics of immigration law to advice workers. Apply (Course fee £15) to **Info. & Training Officer, JCWI, 115 Old St, EC1V 9JR.**

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